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DREISER
LOOKS AT RUSSIA

by
THEODORE DREISER

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DREISER LOOKS AT RUSSIA



CHAPTER I

I AM INVITED TO RUSSIA

WHILE it is known that I am an incorrigible individualist—therefore opposed to Communism—the Soviet Government invited me to visit Russia to investigate conditions there; and I accepted the invitation on the following terms:

1. That I be free to choose my itinerary and make any inquiries I desired to make.

2. That I be provided with a secretary-interpreter wherever I went.

3. That I would not be considered rude to my government host if my study of Russia should result in an expression of unfavorable conclusions.

4. That I would be under no obligation to publish any report of my trip, favorable or unfavorable, if I did not feel so inclined.

These terms were graciously accepted by cable, and I sailed from New York, October 19, 1927. I spent altogether eleven weeks in Russia, leaving Moscow and Leningrad after a time to travel into such far inland cities and outlying regions as Perm, Novo-Sibirsk, Novgorod, Kiev, Kharkov, Stalin, Rostov, Tiflis, Baku, Batoum, and

all of the region bordering on the Black Sea between Batoum and Odessa.

My conclusions are arrived at deliberately, but it would be unfair to the Soviet régime as well as myself to assume that so brief a survey would qualify anybody to prepare a sound or complete analysis of the most tremendous government experiment ever conducted. What I offer are my experiences and observations honestly set down.

As a westerner, accustomed to the comparatively mild climate of the United States, I can only look upon Russia as a boreal world that would try any save those born of its very soil. To me it seemed, at times and in places, almost pitiful that man should find it necessary to conquer a land of such biting winds and vast spaces. It seemed, at the same time, not a little astounding that this same land, dotted as it is with so huge a population, and hitherto restrained by such untutored conditions, should be the scene of the latest experiment in human government, although I am informed that Lenin himself believed that Russia because of its generous and almost sacrificial spirit was the best country in the world in which to try Communism.

I feel that the Soviet form of government is likely to endure in Russia, perhaps with modifications, and not only that but spread to and markedly affect, politically, all other nations. Against this and though the system has wonderful features, I do not wholly agree with either its philosophy or its technique. It is too much like replacing one kind of dogmatic tyranny with another. At the same time I have the feeling that our own country may eventually be sovietized—perhaps in my day. It is not a very great step from a nation of chain stores, chain hotels, chain newspapers, and chain industrial and mercantile establishments of every description to a chain soviet system conducted, as in Russia, by a dominant group.

Yet in the main I believe that the Russian people are satisfied with the Soviet mechanism, and that they think it is perfecting itself daily. True, I do not believe that more than twenty-five per cent of all those who inhabit Russia really understand—however much they may hear of—the present communistic program and its import to them. Yet with an enormous industrializing process in full swing and beneficial to all it is not possible for the average Russian who hitherto has had so little not to be impressed and rather for than against it. And so I conclude that it is probable that Russia will become one of the mightiest economic forces the world has known, as it is to-day probably the mightiest military power.

The following are some of the principal good features of the Soviet system as I found them:

First. Its leaders, theoretic and practical, realize that the best thing for everybody is work in some form, either mental or physical, and the worst thing idleness, either enforced or personally desired; and they have set themselves the task of providing work and eliminating idleness. I most heartily approve of that.

Next. They feel that the amount of work assigned to each should be not more than is necessary to provide all with all of the privileges and comforts of a very highly developed state—a state economically, artistically, intellectually and socially agreeable and perhaps beautiful; also that after that the individual may do with the rest of his time as he chooses.

Third. I was and remain profoundly impressed by the fact that here is one government that, as a government, is actually awake to and enthused by the possibilities of the human mind as a creative instrument that, freed from dogma and slavery of every kind, is likely to lead man away from ignorance and misery to knowledge and hap-

piness and with this thought or possibility in mind is almost dramatically concerned with the work of so freeing and educating that mind. The fact that mistakenly (as I see it), and like the Catholic Church in the outer world, it is now bent on seizing upon the ignorant and impressionable mind of the child and via dogma and any and every form of assertion and manufactured bias twisting it toward a complete and unquestioning acceptance of Communist theory and practice is only partially against what I have previously said. For along with this dogma and this grip on the mind of the child goes truly one of the finest systems of child education I have ever seen—so excellent that I wonder whether in the course of time it will not result in a modification of dogmatic Communism in Russia—a new social rationale, in short, which may give us as ideal a government as has yet been achieved. I most certainly hope so.

Furthermore—and I think this is one of Russia's most valuable features—they will not permit any individual accumulation of wealth, since they argue that individual wealth on the one hand can only spell individual poverty and want on the other—and this they will not endure. To avoid it they have erected the super-State or trust which owns and controls everything. How this state or trust is organized is now too generally known to need an explanation here. Their contention is that it derives all its power and meaning from the thought and will of the people. With this I do not exactly agree, since Russia at present is a dictatorship with very little if any privilege of self-expression on the part of the mass. But certainly it derives its present justification from the improved welfare of its people. Any one who does not believe that should visit Russia and see.

Another feature I approve of in connection with this

Russian development is this—that in pursuit of this ideal of work for everybody, it has set out to awaken the individual intellectually to the fact that if he desires to remain fairly comfortable under any form of government he must first be willing to take only so much for himself as will satisfy his personal needs and ambitions, and that without foreshortening or stultifying the needs and ambitions of any other. Also, that in order to have enough for his own personal needs and ambitions he must contribute the same amount of work or thought, or both if he chooses (and more if he likes), as everybody else, so that the government or organism of which he is a part shall be a success and able to do those collective things which all individuals as members of a great social organism would have that organism do for them.

Next, these leaders, in consultation with the workingmen and workingwomen of Russia, have fixed upon what they consider a worth-while social arrangement or program into which every one must fit, whether at present they wish to or not. This is the new industrial program of Russia, and it means that all who eat must work. But in such ways as they can, of course—not all at machinery, by any means. And (and this is an appealing feature, I think) it proposes to make that work a pleasure, not a pain or a disagreeable or ill-paid thing. And to that end it fixes the hours of labor for everybody (children up to sixteen excluded, of course) at as few as are, at present, consistent with the economic and social needs of the country—the necessity, for instance, of providing everybody with food, clothing, a place to live, a place or places in which to be entertained, medical treatment and rest with pay in case of illness or accident, a vacation in summer, a pension in old age, and so on.

But at present—or so say the leaders—because of such

things as lack of technical training, economic depletion resulting from the Great War and Russia's private wars, and the lack of stored capital in the country at the time Communism took charge, and because Russia needs money very badly now to buy machinery, hire technicians and internally develop its resources, everybody must work eight hours, and not only that but work intensely. But, say these leaders also—speaking always for the masses, of course—as soon as this technical and economic development or improvement is even in part effected, the men and women of the country will not have to work either so hard or so long. If a little later, for instance, it is found that all that Russia desires to do for everybody can be effected with only seven hours' work a day—why then everybody will work only seven hours. In fact, according to the decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee in October, 1927, the seven-hour day was made universal for industrial workers and is being put into effect this year. The six-hour day for office workers and those engaged in dangerous or injurious occupations remains in force. And if a little later, all the great things the people would like to have and do—clothes, living quarters, travel, reading matter, entertainment and education—can be bought and paid for with only six hours' work on the part of everybody, then six hours' work it shall be. Later if five or four, or even three, will do it, then five or four or three will be the hours of work required in any mill, office or even on the farm, which is also to be industrialized.

Not only that, but since work in some form is to be the allotted portion of all, the conditions surrounding each and every one at his or her labor are to be made as comfortable and agreeable as possible. And to that end, and from now on and as fast as work and money will permit, the most agreeable as well as practical type of factory, office, apart-

ment, or dwelling is to be built; in short, the places wherein the workers spend their lives are to be made as attractive or at least as comfortable as is humanly possible, the nature of the work considered.

And it is precisely here, and in connection with just this, that Russia at this time is most interesting to me. For it is in connection with just this theory or plan that all those things which now most interest the world economically are being tried and, as the Russians insist, proved to be possible. I refer, of course, to the vastly improved—some might even think fantastically so—working and living conditions that are everywhere being introduced in Russia at this time, and often in the face of the most disheartening obstacles—climate, ignorance, etc. For go where you will—whether it be in the bleak and windswept spaces of Siberia as at Kusbas, where are coal mines and steel works and power plants and gas factories—or to the Don Basin in South Russia, where are coal, salt, iron, manganese and lead mines; or to Odessa or Leningrad or Kiev or Novgorod or Tashkent in the very heart of Asia—you will find this same thought operative and beginning to show in the very structure and technique of everything that chances to be done.

At the mines, for instance, in Siberia or the Don Basin—(and God, how bleak and windswept these places are!)—are all of those things which make for the safety and comfort of the worker—non-explosive lamps, a system of enforced ventilation underground, electric lights, modern electric drills, gas masks, and so on. And the miner is clothed in special clothing furnished by the government. And at the mine head, to which he may return at the end of six hours, his day's work done, is not only a rest-room but a Russian hot bath. For the miner at the bank-head—the actual driller—works only six hours, because the gov-

ernment considers his work especially dangerous. Other men working, say, in the lateral shafts or outside, work eight (at present), since their work is less dangerous. And he, the mine-head worker, makes 250 roubles a month (25 more than Mr. Stalin or Mr. Lunacharsky), as opposed to from 100 to 150 for others connected with easier work. Also, all mine-workers are heavily insured against danger.

In addition, all miners, as well as nearly all active industrial workers at this mine, are housed in newly-built three- or four-room cottages, with a bath, veranda, and a little garden. And for their recreation and entertainment, there is usually a really handsome club building, containing a swimming pool, a bowling alley, a billiard room, a theater, a reading-room, library, gymnasium, and restaurant. And this club is for men *and* women. And at the mines, or near the factory, or office, there are quite regularly a hospital, a sanitarium, a library, a kindergarten and nursery—in short, as many cultural and uplift facilities for both men and women and their children as possible. And in summer these workers—in mines, factories, railroads, offices—have a month's vacation with pay, at some resort on the Black Sea, or the Caspian, or the Volga, or where they will.

I have seen these things and know what I am talking about. And taken as a whole, and apart from some other phases of the Communistic theory, certainly they make something of which I can and do approve. And relatively this thing extends to every form of employment in Russia—railroad workers, shipping workers, lumber workers, drivers of trucks, clerks; carriers of bundles in Tashkent and Baku, the workers in the oil fields and fish canneries in Baku on the Caspian or on the Black Sea *and* on the Arctic. But whether as much can be done for the peasants

in Russia (of whom, by the way, there are 120,000,000), remains to be seen, for their problem is very different. I have dwelt on this matter in greater length in another chapter of this book.

Another thing that I heartily approve of is the Russian system of education, apart from that phase of it which seeks to eliminate from the human brain or chemism all personal self-interest. I do not believe that can be done. And even if it could be, I question its desirability. But the social approach to knowledge in general is so interesting and simple and clear that I consider it the most intelligent I have ever seen.

Indeed I go so far as to express the wish that our own present school system could be "scrapped" and replaced by this new and most enlightening way to knowledge and *thought*. Even the most casual observer of results accomplished in our schools, as demonstrated by the mental capacities of hundreds of thousands of graduates turned out yearly, is forced to admit that the very last thing our girls and boys acquire is the *ability to think*. Now it may be that in the continued effort to enlarge and improve the courses of study in our schools and colleges, that invaluable and everlastingly profitable attribute of a person's mind, the power and necessity to concentrate and cogitate or think for himself, is lost sight of. Or if not that, our attempts to cultivate it have proved abortive. Certainly there are, and always will be, persons naturally gifted with the power of thinking for themselves, and these come through despite any defects in their schooling. But, on the other hand, there are those inadequate, incapable minds for which the most perfect educational system ever devised can do very little. They cannot reason for themselves. But granting all that, here now in Russia is a system in operation that does move the boy and the

girl to think. And that, aside from its other excellent features, recommends itself to me so strongly that I am enthusiastically in favor of it and am hoping that I may live to see it adopted here,

By painted signs or blocks and by word of mouth the child is taught the alphabet and numerals up to ten or a hundred. But from there on, and in classes or groups of children of his own years, he is given an object—a book, or a toy, or a piece of wood, or string, or anything you please. His hat, say. Well, what is the thing he has in his hand? It is a hat. What is a hat? What is it like? What is it made of? Has it color? What is a color? What makes a color? Has a hat a shape? What makes a shape? And now as to size, weight, texture. Suppose we lay a lot of hats in a row. How many hats are there?

Well, as you see, you bite into life anywhere. And at once you come upon a thousand problems—lingual, grammatical, arithmetical, physical, chemical, social, biologic. And naturally, as you can see, depending upon the inherent capacity of the child, it learns about everything at once as fast as it can. And as fast as it develops a special interest, it can learn about that, and follow it. There are no such things as formal recitations, no confined and special studies, although all the usual and special topics are listed and by degrees introduced. And by degrees there is class government as well as class morals. And from the data I gathered and the children I saw, I assume that the results eventually prove enormously effective. At any rate I can not help admiring a government that makes such an intelligent approach toward this question of education. Dogma, other than Communistic dogma, of course, is out. But at any rate it can be said for Communistic dogma it seeks to give every living human being an equal

start in the life race and afterwards to help him as much as possible in his struggle to sustain himself and the race. If this proves to be moonshine, then, of course, Communism will surely fail.

And another thing I approve of in this connection is the economic as well as legal and political emancipation of women. You hear a great deal of what has happened to the morals of women in Russia, but in so far as I could see they are no worse than the morals of women anywhere else in the world at this time. The change, if any, seems planetary—not racial or national. In Russia—as every one knows by now—marriage is no longer the binding thing it once was. Divorce is easy—merely a declaration of intention to separate. There is nothing in it on that score for either Church or State; no shyster lawyers, nor overcrowded courts with sociologically uninspired judges, nor priest with ceremonies and sacraments that cost and bring money into the exchequer of a fat loafing hierarchy of religious soothsayers. And since there is no private property, or very little, the customary legal bickering and conniving in connection with that is out. There is no reason for either husband or wife to hang on (love or no love) in the hope of making something out of it. Furthermore, since both must work and can, when necessary, make their own way, there is none of that infernal whimpering in connection with what is to become of the poor wife or her child. She is to get work and support herself—as she should—and probably already does. If she is ill and cannot, the husband contributes one-fourth of what he earns until she is able to work and the State does the rest. Not only that, but where children are concerned, the State steps in and does, as it should, the natural and intelligent thing. Is the child sixteen years of age? Very well, then it is time for it to go to work and

support itself. Is it not sixteen—and care and education are still required—then husband and wife contribute pro rata out of their earnings until the child is old enough to go to work. No squabbling, you see, as to what property the child should have—since there is no property for the child to have. Personally, I think the idea is glorious—and for once in my life, in one country on this earth, if only for a little while, I was rid of our infernal newspaper racket concerning divorces, suits for breach of promise, alienation of affection, alimony and the support of an alleged helpless child or two or six—everything, in short, that in America to-day helps to while away the hours of the mentally unemployed.

And now, and through this, we come to sex and the unbelievable palaver and clatter that is connected with it everywhere save in Russia! (Discussion of immoral books and plays, vice societies and their crusades, public censors, police raids, elopements, shootings, rapes, sadistic murders and the like!) I am pleased to report—and absolutely safe from contradiction when I say it—that nearly all this nonsense is non-existent in Russia. There are no papers that give any space to these things. And since marriage and divorce—or agreed-upon cohabitation between two persons—is not only easy but normal and without public criticism, there is not and cannot be any of the vast excitement which is connected with sex and its repression elsewhere. For there is no real repression. A scene in a play or a book, or in real life, for that matter, that might bring the police or the censor in America would certainly not do so there. They just do not see sex the way we do. It is normal and natural. A passion may last or it may not. Not being connected any more with money or social position, or religion, even, it stands a relationship which two persons must fix on for themselves. If there is no rape

or murder, there is no real crime. And since adultery is not listed in the penal code, people go their way making such personal adjustments as they can, working daily because they must and wasting precious little time on tricks or financial or social plotting in connection with love or sensuality. As you see, there is nothing to be made out of these things. Not a thing! Stick to your job. Find some girl to be happy with if you can. And after that study and improve your mental and social position. There is no other way. And as I view it now, it is the only sane treatment of the sex question I have ever encountered.

However, there are other special and different treatments of many of the world's economic and social problems, some of which will be indicated here. These cause one to feel that much in the way of improvement is certain to come of it all. On the other hand, as I have said, Communism may not work, but if it does not, some form of democracy or improved dictatorship on the part of such people as wish to better things, will. Under the circumstances, I am not inclined to complain, but applaud. What is more, I would like to see Russia as it is now, recognized and aided financially in order that this great impetus to something better may be strengthened. For here is a thinking people. And out of Russia, as out of no other country to-day, I feel, are destined to come great things, mentally as well as practically. At least, such is my faith. And with such a possibility in so troubled and needful a world as ours, is it not common sense to aid it to do the best it can?



CHAPTER II

THE CAPITAL OF BOLSHEVIA

I HEARD much concerning Moscow before I went there—and more since my return—among other things that it is not an attractive city; that it is unbelievably dull, half-starved, half-clothed. With the statement that it is not well-clothed and rather crowded, I will agree, but as for being dull, do not believe it! I have never seen a city, either in Europe or America, that I thought possessed more of that extreme essence of all attractiveness—difference, and best of all, the difference that springs from color and variety.

Rambling, disjointed streets and squares! Numerous and agreeable surprises in the way of open spaces, trees, monuments, vistas. Drab, moth-eaten and yet colorful palaces and once grand private homes, obviously the former residences of capitalists, traders, social parasites, social blood-suckers! Oh, and the churches! 384! Count 'em! With lovely green or gold or brown or red or white or purple pineapple domes. And bell towers packed with a most amazing variety of bells—bells that emit such a clatter of sweet, tinny, somber, even ominous, sounds as

never anywhere else issued out of any belfry, I am sure. And cobblestones and general untidiness and casualness. (These were not introduced by the Bolsheviks, as I understand it.)

And then cars, and busses, and droshkies, and trucks, and queer little tatterdemalion wagons hauling practically nothing—(these casual, easy-going Russians!)—a barrel, a few fish, a dozen chairs, or a bathtub! And one day an open hearse (not otherwise employed at the time and therefore, of course, in Russia, available for any purpose), hauling a bale of hay! I lie not! As God is my judge! These Russians, you know. And business is business! And why not, pray? In Moscow? In Russia? A mere commonplace, I assure you. And up in front, in some three hundred and eighty-four furs, more or less, and seventeen hats, a comfortable, if somewhat rounded, Russian, ambushed in whiskers and smoking what I am sure must have been a pipeful of Mahorka, the most infamous tobacco that was ever grown. A deadly weed, indeed, and one whiff of which almost did for me on the snowy sidewalk to the right, where, spell-bound and open-mouthed, I stood, an easy victim to its deadly fumes. (If I had gone under, he would merely have added me to the bale of hay, I am sure. A little extra business!)

And then thousands of men and women in padded furs and skirts, looking more like walking mattresses than anything else I can think of. And fur hats or caps—shakos or woollen drums or muffs—only always on the head—that in America would add glory and distinction to even a Shriner band or a K. P. guard. And booths, where men in beards, boots and sheepskins, sell pirojki (meat rolls), cigarettes, and fruits from the Crimea. And women with shawls over their heads peddling everything from apples to brassières. And against them the Byzantine glory of those

monuments to former rulers—palaces, and, above all, churches, lavish in gold, roofed in cobalt and jade, or gilt and green, and making up for lack of grace of form in fantastic design and daring ornamentation, looking not unlike Oriental jewels in tarnished and shabby settings.

The new Russia, remember, contains 163, or 167 (I never *could* fix that figure, even in Russia!), tribes, or peoples, or small nations—call them what you will—varying considerably in color, costume, language, physical design, and other little details of temperament or emotion. Consider only the Turks, Turkomans, Armenians, Persians, Afghans, Mongolians, Kazaks, Kirghiz, Georgians, Usbeckistanese, Tadshikistanese—all roving about the mighty empire of the U.S.S.R. and free under the new rules to do so—and then consider that Moscow is the renowned and nominated head of the same, and you can imagine what an interest it holds for the live and dynamic tribes of this great world. Samples of them drift daily to Moscow, many of them to stay. Positively, I was sometimes so astounded by a quite uncalculated effect approaching along a thoroughfare that I was rendered speechless. “Does this man actually feel that he is all right?” “Can any one truthfully say to me that he does not feel a—ah, well, slightly in the public eye?” They can, and would. Except for yourself, new to this amazing world, he or she attracts no attention. In short, I do now aver that I could put a tin saucepan on my head, a pair of Dutch wooden shoes on my feet, wrap a Navajo blanket or a bed quilt or mattress around my body, strap it all on with a leather belt, and sally forth and attract not so much attention as I would should I appear in a silk hat and evening clothes. It is Russia. It is U.S.S.R. It is that amazing medley of nations or tribes that have now joined in one common bond and are on the march to a better day.

Another thing concerning Moscow—they always tell you that the overcrowding there is since the war, or, more accurately, since Moscow was once again made the seat of government by the Bolsheviks. But this is not true. The housing problem was acute in 1902 and 1907, over ten per cent of the dwelling places of the poor being underground then. The city has grown rapidly since 1870, and is growing rapidly now, and although much is made of the fact that to-day two or more persons occupy one room, in 1907 there were more than 10,000 domiciles with four occupants to each room, and representing one-fourth of the population. Yet to-day, if you speak of two or more occupants to a room, the Communists themselves apologize. They do not know the history of their own capital.

And another curious thing in connection with the city is this. It has, after a fashion, a Communist history not unlike that which has unrolled itself since the 1917 revolution. It is a fact that about the end of the fifteenth century, and in order to give Moscow power and authority, its dominant princes transported to it and to neighboring cities in their domain—Vladimir, for one, not more than a hundred miles away—no fewer than 18,000 of the richest Novgorod merchant families and themselves, like the Communists of to-day, took over the entire trade of the city. I mentioned this to Kalinin, the Soviet President, and to Tchicherin, the Foreign Minister, but they had never heard of it.

But in the main, my general impression of Moscow, sleighing and walking here and there, was that it was in a comparatively clean and healthy, and even vigorous state. The streets are cobble-stoned, and if the snow has melted are muddy. But between November first and April first, it has not melted; more likely, it has worn away, been powdered and blown heaven knows where, so that

more snow has to be hauled (and is) and thrown upon them in order to provide the necessary bedding for the sleighs. During all this long winter season Moscow has a whitey freshness against which the ocher and gray and white buildings outline themselves with an appealing softness, which is only emphasized by the reds, greens, blues, yellows, browns, and glistening gilts of the pineapple-shaped domes of the churches. True, the façades are often mildewed and chipped; the little iron porches so common all over Russia are rusted and the woodwork not generally repainted. And the fine old palaces, museums, houses of once wealthy merchants, are now turned into libraries, art galleries, memorials, hospitals, clinics. And there are no dashing carriages, no splendid motor cars. There is no show, no luxury. You wander here and there, and you will see thousands who are comparatively poorly dressed to ten—at most a hundred—who are well-dressed. And yet, generally speaking, a sense of well-being—none of that haunting sense of poverty or complete defeat that so distresses one in western Europe and America. It is not to be found.

Yet in Moscow there is poverty. There are beggars in the streets now as there were before the proletariat took charge. Plenty of them! But Lord, how picturesque! The multi-colored and voluminous rags of them! I certainly have seen Joseph's coat of many colors, only in these instances so threadbare and dirty. But covering, in the main, people not thin but stout, hence not truly emaciated by want, rather suggesting creatures who at bottom are not as much put upon as you might fear. For indeed their state is not such that they would starve in case you did not give them anything. On the contrary, as you can readily prove for yourself if you wish, they are begging because it is easier to collect an income that way than to go to the

government dole agencies and prove that they have no (as we say) "visible means of support"—(What the hang is a "visible support," anyway?)—and so obtain the allotted dole for "down-and-outs"; i.e., fifteen roubles a month and a place to sleep. For that probably involves a return of some sort—a little labor or an effort to find it—whereas begging merely presupposes standing in the streets in the cold and snow, an obligation much less difficult for a Russian than it would be for you, you may be sure.

And there are unemployed. It is claimed that these consist mainly of peasants who have migrated to the towns from the country and office employees who have been discharged as a result of reduction of office staffs in the State and administration departments in connection with the effort to reduce the cost of administration.

But, as I have said, the well-dressed persons, though few, are there also. And while the old palaces and buildings are stained and worn, there are newer things that speak of a brighter day. For the new, if gray and somewhat hygienic, General Post & Telegraph Building is long and high and wide and suggests in all its features the latest details of a Chicago commercial structure (not a skyscraper), and probably is borrowed in spirit from the Great Lake city which Russia so much admires. (If there is one would-be Chicago in Russia, there are nine! Chita, Kharkov, Stalin, Novo-Sibirsk, Baku, Vladikafkaz, Perm, a long company!) Also there is the mighty pile that houses *Izvestia*, the official government's newspaper mouth-piece—the great factory in which the world's news is doctored and sent out sufficiently communized for local consumption. And then many great new warehouses or government wholesale emporiums which house all that is nationally to be had at the moment of hemp, grain, tea, sugar, groceries, hardware, tallow, dry goods, drugs, skins,

timber, wool, iron, or the manufactured products of such things.

Before the revolution, these same bazaars, banks, wholesale houses and what not else were in private hands, and I am told that the Kitai Gorod, or business heart of the city, was as lively a mart as one would wish to see. It had an exchange with twelve hundred brokers—now no more, of course—and the printing office of the Synod of the Greek Orthodox Church, now a pale memory of its former self. Yet to-day, being a Government trading station, the region is lively enough. It covers 121 acres north of the Red Square, one side of which it forms. This *Red Square*, by the way, dates from pre-Bolshevik days—not post. During my struggles for official information I was constantly running into some part of it, to sit with some Communist chief whose various official rooms were as extensive as those of a hotel. You fancy, perhaps, that these poor Bolsheviks know nothing of business, that there can be no commercial zest unless some one is getting something out of it. Well, dear reader, whether a man can or cannot acquire wealth seems to be neither here nor there when it comes to the functioning of the trader mood. Once a trader, always a trader, money or no money! And so, in the great wholesale houses or centers of the coöperative or the Government enterprises, what a busy and purely commercial sight! New, well-lighted and furnished buildings, with all of those up-to-the-minute devices which you would expect to find in any well-equipped wholesale enterprise—telephones, call bells, speaking tubes, elevators, comptometers, cash registers, and the booths and packets, books and safes and what not which go with a lively commercial exchange. And always I was dumbfounded by the stocks on hand, the number of clerks hurrying to and fro, the visiting traders, the groups of conferring officials; the piles of furs, clothes,

grains, metals, groceries, spread upon long, well-made tables, about which would be gathered Government buyers and—so odd when you think of it—Government sellers. And as for their facial expressions, I personally would never have guessed that these were individuals who were not expecting to make a profit out of their labors. The sight brought home to one the feeling that either the Communist theory could not be all wrong or that in some secret way the non-profit, non-trade idea was being circumvented. For most certainly there is trade, and lots of it. And a lively interest in it on the part of thousands. Read me that riddle, if you can!

I was likewise astonished by the size of some of the mills in Moscow. But from the fifteenth century on, the villages around Moscow were renowned for the variety of small industries which they carried on. The first large manufactories in cotton and woolen fabrics, china, silk, and glass in Great Russia were established at Moscow in the seventeenth or eighteenth century. After 1830, in consequence of a protective tariff, the manufactories in the province of Moscow increased rapidly in number, and before the war it had become the principal manufacturing city in the empire. To-day it is not so much that, but even now there is much industry, and you encounter belching chimneys and great workingmen's quarters, mostly new, in many parts of the city.

The famous Tverskaya (through which the Czar used to enter the city and which runs, so they say, through to Leningrad) is like the shopping street of a small town. It boasts no high buildings, no brilliant shop windows. Now and then, interiorly, you will be amazed by the color, richness, order and repletion of the stocks offered by some of the Government or coöperative food stores. Gray Molossal caviar; Crimean grapes, sweet as honey and big

as plums; pears, apples, plums, oranges, pomegranates, tangerines, figs. And wines, brandies, liquors and vodka. And best of all, the marvelous champagne of the Caucasus, and not nearly as expensive even now as pre-war champagne in America. I heard of famine in Russia (in Germany before going to Russia), but looking in these Moscow stores, as well as in other stores throughout Russia, tended to dispel the idea. There might be undernourishment in some quarters for lack of means, but no real necessity for famine anywhere, unless the Government should prove incompetent or indifferent to its own theories of distribution.

And more, you see long lines of buyers in the stores. And perhaps wonder at this. One explanation is that many persons have two or three jobs. Also you must consider the fact that most of the usual normal expenses are lifted from the shoulders of the worker. He pays very little rent, gets his entertainment free or at reduced prices, can be treated free in a hospital if he is sick, and is insured against nearly every emergency. Therefore, he has money to spend in this fashion if he desires to do so.

Apart from this, and looking at the city in general, you come upon occasional patches of consistent grandeur which scarcely suggests poverty, depression, or indeed anything even remotely connected with the same. For instance, there is the Kremlin (or Kreml, as they call it in Russia)—a mighty, walled-in block of buildings which until the revolution were occupied by the Boyar aristocracy, but since then house the Communist leaders and their principal officials. But what a world! Above a tall, thick, ruddy wall—on one side facing the Moscow River, on others the Red Square and one of Moscow's parks—bloom such flowers of towers and spires and domes, such princely roofs and cornices as Aladdin himself might have conjured out of his lamp. Indeed, the most Oriental scene in Europe,

and a most arresting thing to dream over, leaning against a parapet of one of the Moscow River bridges, in sun or shadow.

To the north of this Kremlin is the Red Square, called so, as I have said, long before the days of Bolsheviks, however appropriate it may seem now. Against its southern border, formed by the north wall of the Kremlin, stands the comparatively humble tomb of Lenin, to which nightly march the faithful, almost a thousand strong, to view his body. Already by the ordinary Russian mind he has been canonized. And I was told by many that his embalmed corpse—quite the same in looks to-day as the day he died—is enmeshed in superstition. So long as he is there, so long as he does not change, Communism is safe and the new Russia will prosper. But—whisper—if he fades or is destroyed, ah, then comes the great, sad change—the end of his kindly dream.

Mysticism? Thy name is Slav.

An old-time rostrum as well as execution block, where princely decrees were read and executions performed, still stands in the center of this square—almost opposite Lenin's tomb. (It is still usable, never fear, and looks ominous enough!) And beyond that, again to the north (the side opposite that of the Kremlin wall), and for almost the entire length of the Square (an oblong, really), the white front of an enormous Government department store, "Goom," literally swarming by day with customers. At the west end is a rather dreary historical museum, with arches underneath for the east and west traffic of the city. But just outside that, a little, gaudy, blue and white and gold shrine, that of the Iberian Virgin, very efficacious for all human ills, and swarming like a bee-hive with mystic Russians crossing themselves, kissing images and Bibles, and mumbling the most reverential of prayers; yet opposite

this same shrine again, where all of the mystical worshipers may see and read, if they will, flaring from the wall of the State Finance Department the most daring of all modern announcements: "Religion is the Opiate of the People." If it were left to me, I would alter this to read "Dogmatic Religion is the Opiate of the People."

At the east end of this same Red Square the almost incredible Church of St. Basil (or, as the Russians know it, that of Vassili Blajenoi), pineapple-shaped domes without, gorgeously and yet harmoniously colored, and within lavishly decorated with fretted brass and silver and gold. (Where and when and why should men and women have worked so patiently and intricately, and uselessly, really?) All of the upper part of this church, once a great religious chamber, is now a museum of art. But below are some shrines left intact, and Russians (always the older ones, you will note), smack-smacking with their lips the feet of carved or painted saints, or of Christ or the Virgin, each new pair of lips most unsanitarily laid where but a moment before another pair rested. (Oh, germs! Diseases! Plagues! Contagions!)

But over all, as you look up from the Square, the domes and minarets and towers and spires of the Kremlin—with their flashing double crosses and golden eagles and crescents—of churches and monasteries and shrines built by princes and czars within the Kreml itself, where now are all the irreligious Bolsheviks! And jackdaws! The one flourishing and appropriately temperamental bird of all Russia—as fat, easy, genial and apparently meditative and social as are all Russians. Jackdaws swirling or sitting in rows. Or nudging each other off topmost pinnacles. And below them, their shadows on the ground, trudging Russians. And droshkies or sleighs. And trucks and cars and autos. The new and the old. One could not

fail of interest in the Red Square. One can never forget it, really.

Or the jackdaws! They are everywhere in Russia. I am told that to the Russians they are semi-sacred. A lymphatic bird, they fly in clouds, with an easy lethargic motion, playing about with each other as they fly. Hanging over the half-Asiatic city of Moscow they give it a more friendly look than otherwise it might wear. Circling above the Kremlin, they seem somehow an ancient and baronial part of an old and drastic and gloomy world. Seeing them there, I saw Czar Theodor, on the steps of his church, asking of his God: "Why did you make me Czar?" And below their darkling wings I could see Ivan killing his son or being slain by his courtiers. Even now it is a stern, drastic, almost tyrannical world that is below, tyrannical in its determination to abolish tyranny, but above, these wings seem free and indifferent enough, detached. In the older days below, was misery, dogma, mysticism, a pathetic slavery to an age-old fallacy; above, birds that were pagan, social, genial, gay. How casual and accidental nature can be—freedom, ease, content, side by side with enslavement and misery!

One other thing that kept forcing itself continually on my consciousness in Moscow—later in all Russia—was the wide distribution and use of the "Primus," the world's noisiest, one-burner, blue-flame oil stove. Suppose, I used to say to myself in Moscow, that this was a nice, warm, summery city, like Los Angeles, with all these Russians in nice, light clothes, and that all of them liked fresh air (which they don't), and that in consequence all of these Moscow windows now so tightly closed were open to the air and sunlight? What a roar around breakfast, lunch, or dinner! The blue flashes and sputterings! And the gases, or gas, rather! Or suppose Russia were being

attacked, say, and as a matter of defense all of these stoves were lighted at once and set in rows, or carried forward, roaring, sputtering, and smoking? The poor invaders! Their horrible finish! And yet, the thousands of Russians who, to avoid the full fruits of Communism—the communal kitchen, for one thing—insist on these Primuses, because they can cook on them in their own rooms. Beneath the closed windows of attractive-enough apartment houses and communal homes I used to hear them. Sput, sput, sput! Buz-z-z-z! Ah, another dinner, I used to say to myself—or another lunch—or Katushka is going to iron—or curl her hair—or have some tea! So I meditated as I walked and thought on how to perfect Communism so that the Primus might be eliminated.

As far as amusements go—at present, anyhow—I fear that Moscow is the dullest city in the world, not even excluding Kansas City. The theaters where hold forth those three geniuses of the Russian theatrical world—Stanislavsky, Meierhold and Tairov—are commendable, and even fascinating at times, for the art of their actors as well as the novelty or difference of their technique. But beyond that, just what? What do they do that is not done as well elsewhere? I saw “Desire Under the Elms” as done by Tairov. The settings were striking, the acting as good as that of the New York production—no better. At Meierhold’s I saw Gogol’s “Revizor” in a cramped and highly artificial setting. I saw it done on the East Side of New York quite as well. As for Stanislavsky, the world knows what he can do, but because of the Communist desire for propaganda, he cannot do much here. For one or another political reason, such things as “Hamlet,” “The Master Builder,” “The Cherry Orchard,” Hauptmann’s “The Weavers,” “The Wild Duck,” are taboo—either too grim or they deal with kings or queens or preach class inferiority

or superiority. In their places then are put Bolshevik melodramas of the post-war revolutionary type—the good, kind Communist triumphant or unjustly or shamefully put upon! And drawing crowds!

But then, you say, what of the social life of this great city? How do the people amuse themselves? Well, unless they are entertained by such things as these and a cheap form of moving picture, or books, good or bad, I know not how they make out. Just here I would like to interpolate, in this new Russia Zane Grey, James Oliver Curwood, Rex Beach, Ethel M. Dell, as well as Jack London, Fanny Hurst, Edna Ferber, are as popular and more so than ever Tolstoi or Gogol or Dostoevsky could hope to be. The new, free thinking mass, you see. And decidedly, unless you are democratically willing to accept as society the gatherings of scientists, intellectuals, political leaders, commissars, writers, painters, journalists, etc., Society is not. I was told that here and there in Moscow were many personalities of the old régime—people of culture and former wealth who had not succeeded in escaping and who, if one could meet them, would prove interesting. Maybe so. But I met only two, a former Czar's officer turned Communist and a once wealthy merchant's daughter, each living in one room. One heard of others, but one heard also that they were mostly dead or absent. Certainly the city gives no evidence of their presence anywhere. There are no people or families with money or houses in which to entertain, although personal distinction or achievement has still a powerful fascination for every one, Communist or non-Communist, and will draw a crowd anywhere. But at best, the apartments maintained by individuals with a fair salary, personality, and the desire for companionship, consist of only two rooms or at most three. And the result is, small rather than large

group gatherings, with the wife, or companion, aided by a servant, preparing a dinner via the communal stove in the communal kitchen. And much gay talk about Russia, its problems, the attitude of the rest of the world, and the problem of man's place in nature. Sex is a thin subject in Russia, because most of its restraints are absent, and talk of it on that account is at a discount. You must think of some one else besides your neighbor's wife if you want to make a smiling part of an interesting evening in Moscow. And that is certainly startling to a poor, sex-starved American!

But there is, of course, the primitive society of the Communist workers, who put on their own festivals in their clubs or union headquarters, and make a lot out of classes, lectures, plays, art classes, dances, and that sort of thing. And visiting their various clubs and quarters I gathered that life goes on much the same there as anywhere else—wherever there is youth and the desire for mating. Personally, I could see no change in the old game of finding your mate and keeping her—the same flirtatious overtures, the same exaggerated courtesies (for a time), the same hand-holding, behind-door whispering, kissing, embracing, dancing, ending, I assume, in some form of union according to the Russian code.

But in the higher circles (if you wish to think of them in that way), there was (or is) the rather arid and pitiful society of the diplomatic group, which has only the limited foreign colony on which to draw and the members of which, living in huge and sumptuous houses, with silver, porcelain, and space for entertaining hundreds, give each other little luncheons and talk about how long it will be until they can "go out" again to Paris or London.

Again there are the furtive gatherings (so I heard only) of the old bourgeoisie, who get together in foreign

houses or their own crowded rooms, and talk over the past—the possibility of a drift toward democracy, anyhow. And there are fairy stories still afloat concerning this or that prince's jewels buried in some garden of "the old house" which will some day be dug up. Also of a probable change in conditions which will let them out of Russia or their friends into it.

Next, let us say, there is the Bohemia of the artists—as interesting here as anywhere, and consisting of those who stand outside of or apart from this civilization as they do from most, although here, more than in most, I sensed that they sympathized with the liberating, if not the psychologically lock-stepping, dreams of the Communists. The Artists' Club I found to be one of the most amusing and comfortable places in Moscow. It is one of the few places where one can dine, dance, or play billiards. The food and wines are not bad and not, relatively, expensive. Here, amid overornate Empire mahogany and bronze taken from private houses of pre-revolutionary days, are to be found the more interesting of the present-day Russian writers. Also ballerinas from the Grand Opera House, exquisite creatures in sleazy silk dresses which could be bought in Fourteenth Street, New York, for nine dollars, but here exceptional enough. And women painters and poets, and those other often more interesting women who inspire painters and poets.

The gatherings of the journalists, their wives and girls, I found the more enjoyable and most informing of all. They gave you all the real news, free of propaganda, and entertained as liberally as any. Not sentimental, always kindly, and doing favors as readily as they asked them—even more so. And one met so many kinds of people in their rooms, either for or against Russia, as you chose.

Once more there are the imported experts or technicians

and their wives or girls, and the foreign business men looking for concessions (representatives of bankers or trusts). Between these and the Government commissars are many exchanges of civilities, of course, social and otherwise. You hear of parties—really smart affairs—now and then. Then there are the NEP-men (small concessionaires and tradesmen who make money—and are watched). They sit moodily in the restaurant of the Grand Hotel, drink Russian wines, watch the dancing, and think themselves lucky if a ballerina from the opera dances with them. You may see them nightly there, there being no other place to go. Also at the Casino, dancing or perhaps playing a game of baccarat with strange, enigmatic Russians who lose or win heavily without a sign. And does the Government allow gambling? Yes. It even operates the gambling houses. And lotteries and racing, too. As for the winners and their winnings, well, there are the income taxes, and unless the winners are shrewder than the Government officials, they have to pay, so as to keep their incomes down to the average—although I fear that average is a little wobbly even now. I am sure there are ways and ways of doing better than the poor workingman, even in Russia.

Lastly, there are the passing visitors or sightseers, in Russia for a little while and all in Moscow. The stranger with introductions meets many. Personally, I was most amused by the foreign Communists or uplifters (English, American, French, German, Italian), who live in one or another of the dingy hotels, where they entertain or are themselves entertained (small salary attached) by the Communist Government. Some are Communist sympathizers with money and have come to live in Russia and cheer on the cause. A rare lot, really—not a few not wanted in their own lands and not permitted to return. But here, gathering in each other's rooms, they sit on the

floor or on the bed, sing songs, tell stories, drink tea or vodka, and feel themselves very much *en rapport* with Russia, its only sound interpreters really. And they know all that has been done or will be done—day and hour. Sometimes they write articles about it. And they will patronize you, especially if you are not a Communist. How little you know of the one true faith!

Yet Moscow, madly differentiated as it may be in one sense and another, is undeniably a living city, a going concern, as it were. You may feel at times as though life were really topsy-turvy, all askew. For in Moscow it is the sense of tragedy for so many who formerly were here coupled with a form of social relief for those who remain and—who left to themselves might never have been able to achieve it—that gives to the city, and to it more than any other city in Russia, a color and strangeness which are as fascinating as they are grim. Everything goes. Everything comes. Riches are out. Plethora is out. All those purely material distinctions which so irk or gratify one in this our western world completely swept away. You stare. You smile. But you will not say that it is not a good show. You will not say that you are bored, for you are not. It is certainly something new, strange, vital, and, for my part, I hope enduring.



CHAPTER III

RUSSIA'S POST-REVOLUTIONARY POLITICAL AND GENERAL ACHIEVEMENTS

THE chief interest of the English or American observer in modern Russia is directed, of course, to the differences between the form of government functioning there and that in his own country. The Soviet Government holds power, as we know, from the successful revolution in November, 1917. The first revolution in February which overthrew the Czar and brought Russian liberalism to the helm, was accompanied in all parts of the country by the formation of soviets which almost everywhere relieved the old administrative organs, municipal, provincial, etc., of their tasks. These soviets were not unknown to the Russian workers, soldiers and peasants, for they had been formed spontaneously in many parts of the country during the abortive revolution in 1905. In the period between the February and the November revolutions, the Bolshevik wing of the old part of the Russian working class gradually increased its influence over these soviets everywhere, until it finally won a majority in the Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies in St. Petersburg.

The main card with which this success was won was, in my opinion, the uncompromising opposition of the Bolsheviks to the continuation of the war against the Central Powers, plus the obstinate efforts of Kerensky at the bidding of the allied powers to whip a half-starved and despairing people into further slaughter. Typical for the frame of mind of the soldiers and the people in general was the action of a Russian regiment quartered in St. Petersburg shortly before the second revolution. Upon receiving orders to leave for the front to take part in a new offensive, the troops marched without their officers to the war office, forced their way into the place and thrashed every official of any importance they could find. Small wonder then that when it came to the point and on November 7th the Bolsheviks seized power in St. Petersburg, Kerensky could not find sufficient trustworthy troops to repulse the attack. The nation was heartily sick of war and ready to support those people who promised to free them from it. The Bolsheviks promised to do this, the people supported the Bolsheviks, and from that day to this the promise has been kept. The extraordinarily conciliatory attitude of the Russian Government in all crises since is ample proof of this.

Having captured political power, the problem for the Bolsheviks was to hold it against the attempts of the counter-revolutionaries to wrest it from them. There followed a period in Russia, known to the Russians as the period of war-communism. This was the period during which the whole forces of the State had but one aim—to win the civil war, wipe out the counter-revolutionaries, and thus establish international peace as a basis for the second great task, the reconstruction of the shattered economic system of Russia. Here again the Bolsheviks succeeded in their task. With iron will, and, if necessary, with iron brutality, they crushed their enemies, despite the fact that these lat-

ter had the moral and material support of the Entente State and the United States. The support here referred to had expressed itself in the form of an almost unlimited supply of money, huge quantities of war material, and direct military assistance. In one small city, Feodosia, on the Black Sea, about six thousand White Guards and suspected reactionaries were shot. British and American soldiers were in Archangel, the Japanese in Vladivostok, the Poles and White Russians in Kiev and Odessa and along the Black Sea generally.

This period ended approximately with the signing of peace with the Poles after the failure of the attempt to take Warsaw, and the final crushing of the White armies. The military achievements of the Red army in this period, badly fed, badly clothed, and badly equipped, can only be compared with the achievements of the revolutionary armies of France, and could only have been performed by revolutionary armies. With the end of this period of civil war ended also the period of *war-communism*. The basis had been created for the next great task, the reconstruction of Russia's shattered industry and transport. The transformation from war-communism to the *New Economic Policy of Lenin* in the beginning of 1921, *i.e.*, immediately following the victorious conclusion of the civil war, has been regarded generally in the outside world, and even by some ultra-revolutionaries in Russia itself, to have been a retreat from Communism, and a great step towards the reintroduction of the economic system understood by us under the name of capitalism. It was represented that the Russian Government under Lenin had attempted to introduce Communism and had failed, and then recognizing its failure had taken the logical step of permitting the reintroduction, at least to a certain extent, of capitalism. In my opinion, this view is not correct. The ultra-revolutionaries men-

tioned previously may have been, and probably were, of the opinion that a violent and sudden introduction of pure Communism—at the point of the bayonet, so to speak—was possible and necessary. Not so a man of Lenin's capacity—the greatest of all modern leaders, I think. For evolution was a necessary preliminary condition for revolution. In fact, his scheme of revolution may best be compared with the process of gestation accompanying conception and child-birth in a woman—a period of nine months' evolution, followed by the painful and destructive (for the tissue of the mother) revolution accompanying the birth of the child, followed again by a period of evolution represented by the growth of the child.

For Lenin and his supporters, the period of war-communism was not the instrument for the reconstruction of Russia, but simply and solely the economic and political régime most suited to the aim in hand, *i.e.*, the victorious ending of the civil war. Immediately this aim was achieved, the weapon with which it was achieved was placed back in the armory of the Bolsheviks and we shall only see it again, so I was told in Russia, if and when the capitalist world attempts a second intervention. The New Economic Policy as introduced by Lenin was then not a retreat in the face of victorious capitalism, but rather the real beginning of the economic struggle against it. A new weapon for a new aim.

This new weapon has now been in action for almost seven years, and its results can already be judged to a certain extent. In these seven years Russia's shattered economic system, as I found in my tour, has been rebuilt until to-day *the pre-war level of production has been reached and passed.* (Data in support of this fact is furnished in volume by the current heads of all departments in Russia and is rather easily substantiated.) At any rate,

with this change a new period opened up for the Russian Government, the period termed by them the period of the building up of socialism.

And now comes the difference between Russian industry as it existed before the war and as it exists to-day. Large-scale industry, the immense electrical schemes, the harnessing of Russia's immense water power, etc., are to the extent of almost ninety per cent State undertakings. Foreign commerce is to the extent of a hundred per cent under the control of the State through the State monopoly of foreign commerce. Transport is almost completely, if not completely, under the control of the State and the Coöperatives. In the commercial world alone (and that to an ever-lessening degree) does that economic thing known to us as private initiative play any rôle, and even here it is a subordinate one. Something like seventy per cent of all commerce, both wholesale and retail, is now in the hands of the State and coöperative organizations. The influence of the business man (the NEP-man, as he is called in Russia) is limited almost exclusively to commerce, and he is strongest in retail trade. But even here, as any one can see for himself in Russia, the course of development is gradually eliminating him. The private shops are the poorest of all. Those of the State and of the Coöperatives (unions of buyers) are the best. *It is the aim of the State organizations and above all of the coöperatives to eliminate the private trader entirely, not with administrative measures, i.e., not at the point of the bayonet, but by producing better goods at a cheaper price.*

The figures in all branches of industry and commerce for recent years show that the share of the State and coöperative organizations in the economic system of the country is steadily increasing, both relatively and absolutely, both with regard to turnover as well as invested capital.

The last stronghold of the NEP-man is, of course, in the villages. Here the land is officially the property of the State loaned out to the peasantry for usage. There are three types of peasantry—the well-to-do (for Russia), known as the Kulaks; the middle-scale peasantry; and the poor peasantry and direct land-workers. *It is the alliance of the factory workers and soldiers with these two latter categories, i.e., the middle-scale peasantry and the poor peasantry and land-workers, which forms the basis for the present government in Russia.* The break-up of this alliance would make it impossible for any purely proletarian government to maintain itself with only the support of the workers. The policy of the Government in Russia is now, therefore, directed towards maintaining this alliance by sharing the achievements of the development of industry and agriculture between the workers and peasants and reducing the distance between the two classes of those who work, and by making the peasant a participant as well as the worker in the building up of socialism. This latter is achieved by the growth of the coöperative idea amongst the peasantry, by the rational redistribution of the land, by the establishment of direct connection between the workers in the towns and the peasants on the land through so-called adoptions, etc., i.e., the workers of one factory or one industrial district adopt a special agricultural district, collect money to buy tractors and farm implements for this district, distribute literature, make special journeys at the week-end, as far as this latter is practically possible, etc., etc. Thus, the peasants observe their share in the advance of industry in the ever-increasing number of tractors and modern agricultural machinery making their way into the country, also in the coming of the radio, telephone, electric light, phonograph, bus, street car, rural free delivery, etc., etc.

Take the manifesto issued by the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union, *i.e.*, the supreme governing organ of the country, in connection with the tenth anniversary of the 1917 revolution, which was celebrated while I was there. This manifesto promised the workers the introduction of the seven-hour day, and instructed the executive organs to commence with the gradual carrying out of this decision within the space of one year. This decrease of working hours is not to be accompanied by any reduction of wages. A further concession to the workers was the sum of fifty million roubles for the building of workers' dwellings, in addition to an equal sum already set aside for this purpose in the State Budget for 1927-28. To-day, the peasants, in practice, receive still greater immediate benefits. Before the manifesto referred to, twenty-five per cent of the peasants were totally freed from the necessity of paying the single agricultural tax. Yet that manifesto ordered that a further ten per cent be also freed; that is, that thirty-five per cent of the peasantry from now on be further freed from the necessity of paying the agricultural tax. Further, the manifesto freed the peasants from the necessity of repaying the loans received as a credit from the State in connection with the bad harvest of the year 1924-25. The poor peasantry were declared freed from paying their outstanding taxes, and the middle-scale peasants were furnished favorable conditions for repayment of what they used. More, the State also agreed in this manifesto to take over the complete costs for supplying the poor and middle-scale peasants with land, and a further sum of ten million roubles was laid aside for this purpose. A scheme for old-age pensions for poor peasants was promised and is to be put through. Incidentally, the death sentence for all crimes with the exception of crimes against the State, military crimes and armed

banditry, was abolished, and the sentences of all prisoners with the exception of those sentenced for any of the above crimes, plus that of malicious defalcation, were to be reduced.

From this manifesto, issued when I was in Moscow, one can see, I think, that the peasant class is neither down-trodden nor exploited. My subsequent travels confirmed me in this. If anything, my general impression was that the Central Government was trying to do more than the industries and the labor of the people would warrant at this time.

But now as to the people who actually rule Russia. The actual mechanism of the soviets I need not go into. It is rather well known by now, I think. Sufficient to say that the main principle of the franchise in Russia is votes for all those who are working for the aim of the Government, *i.e.*, the building up of socialism, and none of those who are not, such as NEP-men working for their own personal profit. In other words, modern Russia presents us with a class State almost in pure culture, a class State where one class openly dominates, if you will, in contradistinction to other States where the dominance of a class is concealed by the normal methods of democratic liberalism. The men who are the leaders of the State are poor. When they die, as all men must, they leave no estate behind them. This is a most tremendous fact for an outside observer. Whatever one may think of the present-day rulers of Russia, one cannot deny their honesty and, as measured by all our tests, their selflessness with regard to the good things of this world. During the latter part of his life, Lenin (in my opinion the greatest personality of our generation) lived with his wife and sister in two small rooms in the Kremlin, with the exception of that last part of his life when he lived as a convalescent at Gorki.

The rooms of Lenin in the Kremlin have been maintained intact, with everything in them, as far as I know. They offer perhaps a classical example of the simplicity and frugality of the present-day rulers of Russia. Lenin, however, was not alone in this. Most of the leaders live in simple hotel rooms or in single rooms in the Kremlin, and the actual wage of all officials and leaders from Stalin down is 225 roubles a month—about \$112, this being the maximum wage a Communist is permitted to receive. There is no question of personal accumulation of wealth. There can be none, save by graft and outside hoarding, and the men I met did not look like grafters. As a matter of fact, compared with our political leaders and those of some other countries that I have chanced to meet in my time, I rank them as high as any—more earnest, more thoughtful and sincere, more capable of thinking—and that is the highest compliment I can pay them.

There is then, of course, the problem of the Party. The Communist Party is openly the yeast of the revolution, or, as Lenin termed it, the locomotive of the revolution. Through this Party and its nation-wide organization, the hegemony of the working class is maintained, the soviets influenced (controlled if you like), but once again, not at the point of the bayonet but by organized work among the masses, the Communist agents or workers winning the confidence of the latter and acting as their leader. In every working class or peasant organization there is a Communist fraction with its members and officials and leaders who definitely and openly work in an organized fashion to guide the policy of the whole organization. So it is in the soviets themselves and in the soviet congresses which finally elect the government of the country. The Party, of course, has a monopoly and it tolerates no other party at its side. Hence the recent ousting of Trotzky and his followers who

were charged with wanting to organize a second or rival party and so wrest the power from the present group. The régime which now exists in Russia is a dictatorship, openly, a dictatorship of the proletariat, as it is termed. No oppositional parties are tolerated, no bourgeois press and no bourgeois organizations. This dictatorship is a weapon for a particular end—the bringing of that classless, brother-loving society in which no dictatorship will be needed.



CHAPTER IV

THE RUSSIAN VERSUS THE AMERICAN TEMPERAMENT

NEVER in my life have I been more impressed by the mental and temperamental differences that set nations apart than I was by those which divide the Russians and the Americans. As a nation, unit by unit, Americans are so brisk, and esoterically or philosophically so limited. It is, with us, as though we were riding in mental or emotional elevators going as high, say, as the thirty-second floor, yet most of us getting off somewhere below the tenth or eleventh, where are placed all of the material machinery for sustaining what is above, yet (most of us) totally unaware of the floors above. For below is all of the life that concerns us most—the practical, the material; the efficient in practical ways—and never before, anywhere, so briskly and intelligently equipped and managed as on these lower floors.

In Russia, on the other hand, it is as though the same elevators ascended to the same heights, but with most Russians getting off above the tenth floor, all being more interested in what is above rather than what is below. And again it is as though these extreme upper floors were almost

totally enveloped in haze or shadow, within and without, yet many, many thousands of Russians walking there, each more pleased to walk there than in the brisk, material and well-lighted floors at the bottom. An odd contrast, and yet I am sure, a true one.

And in addition, all the more arresting and fascinating because in Russia at this moment functions an enormous group of Communistic leaders or workers—the Communist Party, no less—wholly engaged in assuring us that what concerns them most is all that is going on in the United States below the tenth or eleventh floor. In short, that they are determined to come down from their dreamy perambulations above and fix their attention from now on, or for the present, upon what is below. And Russian workers rubbing their eyes and pinching themselves as they gaze on bright, new machinery (samples of it introduced into all parts of Russia from all parts of the world), and saying yes, yes, this is much better! If we only had this—all we need of it—how quickly would all the work here below be done with, and then we would have so much more time to return up there and think and dream! And for this reason, and no other (or scarcely any other), and with great admiration for all of these mechanical perfections, prepared to study, and even master, these machines in all their intricate details; whereas all Americans (below the tenth floor), while looking on the same machines with the same respectful approval, are saying to themselves at the same time: “Gee! If we only had enough of these and could run them fast enough, we wouldn’t have to work, or think, either! Oh, boy! We could beat it to Florida—or California—or New York—with our girls, and run around in high-priced cars, and never have to think about anything at all! Oh, boy!”

And there you have the intellectual and, after a fashion,

the emotional difference between the two nations—or races, for they are more like different races than different nations.

Indeed, one of my Russian friends—a man well qualified by experience and observation to speak on the subject, and hearing me comment in this fashion—remarked that I was quite right, the Slav temperament or soul was so. And he added that the long winter period (following a short summer season in which the peasant must work sixteen or eighteen hours a day) left him little to do—almost nothing—and made for a passive weariness which in turn reacted toward abstraction and reverie.

So be it! Never was one country technically or materially, or both, more overawed by another than is Russia to-day by the United States. Indeed, I have stood in amazement at times at the childlike naïveté and wonder with which grown Russians (men and women who have been in China and all over Europe), to say nothing of the untraveled youth of the land, will listen to any exaggeration relative to the wealth or splendor or technical equipment of America. "There are factories that employ as many as a hundred thousand men!" "Indeed! How wonderful!" "And there are buildings one hundred stories high, with elevators that go zip to the top or stop exactly at every floor for merely the touch of a button!" "Oh, yes, we have heard all about them. It must be glorious!" "There are states that are tropic and states that are arctic, yet only two thousand miles apart!" "Marvelous!" "You can travel on roads a hundred feet wide, and as smooth as glass, from any part of the land to any other!" "Magnificent!" "Everybody is well-dressed in America; no one is poor. Every one, including all workingmen, has a car, an apartment or a little house, a telephone, a radio, a victrola, electric lights, a gas stove, and time and means wherewith

to travel." "Oh, yes, we know—it is perfect in America." And then they will enthuse over our jazz and our slang—even ask for the latest slang expressions, and if they can use them, especially in English, how advanced each one feels! And, oh, if each could only get to America, melt (as each is sure he would) into all the joys and glories he sees depicted in the American movies! Oh! Oh! Oh!

And yet, in actual practice, who could be more remote than the Russian from that mechanical ease and *sang froid* wherewith Americans "step lively" and "make it snappy." He is, in the main, so slow, and worse, so consciously indifferent to hurry in all of his affairs, not even excepting the manipulation of some of those same wonderful machines or labor-saving devices with which he is sure that he is going to rescue himself socially and economically, that his leaders complain of him. Will he never learn! Will he kindly bestir himself and so speed the coming of the great day for which he prays? There are signs or slogans in all Russian factories which urge him in this way. Nonetheless, he is in no hurry, even now. "Plenty of time! Plenty of time!" And with that he will calmly resign himself to a pace which in America would set to raving any superior who might be compelled to direct him. Yet he does not think he is doing so. He is sure he is doing as well as any one anywhere.

But go to a bank, or a shop, or an office, or a factory. Does any one quickly take notice of your presence or step forward briskly to inquire what it is that you wish? Guess again! You may be taken note of, and probably are—I seemed always to be noting eyes that observed, yet did little else—but as for action, you must wait. It is exactly, as yet, as though there were some formula which needed to be observed, as in China or India, say, though more nearly, perhaps, it may be compared to a chemic state in which a

certain period must elapse before any definite movement can take place. The eyes look and, after a time, the look produces a degree of action.

And this is just as true of men loading or unloading a wagon in Tashkent or Baku as it is in Moscow or Lenin-grad, or of those who are switching cars in a railroad yard in Siberia, or laying brick or plastering or lathing or carpentering in Kiev or Novgorod. And with the excuse these days that no longer anywhere in Russia may the poor workingman be oppressed. His days of slavery for a bloodsucking boss are over. The actions are always deliberate, easy. An engineer will back an engine so slowly toward a car that is to be picked up that sometimes, assuming a nervous temperament like my own, you might want to yell: "Hurry!" Strangely enough, if you want anything of a Russian, it is always: "Sei chass, sei chass!" meaning "Immediately!" or "Forthwith!" But if you imagine anything is coming forthwith, you are sadly disappointed. You must ask, and ask again, and sometimes go. Then, while you storm, some one will come, and with an air so calm that it would do credit to a summer resort idler, most peacefully take the order. But why should you hurry? Why should he hurry? Haven't you all the time there is? And in heaven's name, is there not an eternity of time?

I was discussing these same impressions of mine with one of the oldest, best-informed and most proficient of the American newspaper correspondents in Russia. Was I wrong? "No, far from being wrong, you are absolutely right. These Russians, at present, anyhow, like to think of activity and material success much more than they like to work for it, and that may be because at bottom they really do not want it as much as they think they do. Go into one of the official bureaus here and ask for a name,

an address, a letter of introduction, any fact that needs to be looked up. You will wait and wait. I have waited three weeks for a list of names which a clerk could have looked up in a minute. Yet if I wanted four or five hours of that man's time for an easy and leisurely discussion of something that made no real difference to any one, involved no possibility of action, it would be granted me. Because, in the main, it would be theoretic, speculative, and his mind could wander and intellectualize and spin fine emotional or philosophic dreams."

And yet just now there is a gigantic upward and onward push that concerns and involves all Russia, only I honestly think that it is more of a push from the intellectuals at the top than it is from the emotional, dreamy Russians at the bottom. For go where you will, you will find that it is the Communists and their disciples who are doing the pushing, the vast mass of Russians who are doing the following. Fully alive to this Russian idiosyncrasy or slowness, these leaders seek to hearten the worker toward the necessary speed and interest by the piecework system as well as endless slogans and posters intended to convey to him how marvelous will be his state once he does work quickly and intelligently. Indeed, every shop, factory and Soviet office is full of them. Yet personally I feel that as yet the Russian of this day works fast because the new machine which he is now handling requires a certain speed of the worker, whether he will or not. But as for personal interest or anything snappy in connection with him . . . Not in Russia! You will see the personal interest and snap when it comes to the intellectual or theoretical program that goes with all this—lectures, reading courses, theatrical and musical productions and entertainments which are intended to characterize or symbolize the new social order. To these Russian

workers swarm by the hundreds of thousands. For they are really not fired so much by the material practice or rewards of the moment as by the idea of something very wonderful in the future.

And never, never have I seen a land more poorly equipped with the aids and ways and means of furthering such a program or comforting the citizen or the traveler. To be sure, great changes are under way. Factories and stores are everywhere being built; the latest and most interesting types of machinery and equipment being introduced. In some of the quiet backwood parts of Russia I have seen coöperative stores as beautiful as any in California or New York. It is almost fantastic and yet true. Nonetheless, and in the face of this, there is this slowness and indifference and many, many woeful lacks. I had with me two and sometimes more competent Russians—all Communists and all anxious to make all details of my trip as agreeable as possible—and yet with a letter from the International Relations Bureau of the Government and private letters to local soviets and commissars here and there, it was quite, quite impossible to obtain such details and service as would make any trip agreeable. In the first place, there were invariably delays in connection with the train service everywhere—so much so that it was impossible at any time to learn accurately the time of a train's arrival or departure, or what accommodations, if any, could be secured beforehand. So disastrously was this true in most parts of Russia aside from Moscow and Leningrad that it meant that all too often one went to a station and waited, sometimes hours (once in my case nineteen hours), in order to be on hand in case the train, or any train going one's way, should arrive.

In short, I traveled over Russia in every direction until I was sick and tired of traveling, and never once did a

train start exactly on time or arrive anywhere within the time indicated. From one to fifteen hours was the usual period of lateness. Now it was a snowstorm; now it was a wreck; now a sudden rush of baggage to a station; or, as I noticed myself, nothing more than a desire on the part of union trainmen generally to eat their meals at a prescribed or permitted hour, regardless of whether or not the passengers missed connections. So into the station where one secures the best food, comrades! And take your time! Let the wretched bourgeoisie who can afford to ride, wait! And come out, picking your teeth and looking leisurely around while the nervous passengers sweat! For is this not Russia? And do not the working classes here come first? I'll say they do.

And wrecks, wrecks, wrecks! I saw six on one trip south to Baku and Batoum—wrecks which implied carelessness and little else. At one place, for instance, the rails spread under a freight, which was by no means a heavy one. Four killed and hundreds of thousands of roubles wasted! I saw the materials piled about the tracks—flour and furniture and boxed products. In another place, an oil train brakeman, walking beside the track with his lantern, slips and strikes his lighted lantern against an oily car. Result, a fire. A whole train wrecked and traffic delayed for a day. At another point a second-class passenger train collides with the rear of a delayed freight. Insufficient signals—and three deaths! The other wrecks were remains (*débris*) of three that had occurred within six weeks, and all on the same line. I marveled then that any system could be so inefficient and endure. Yet I was informed that related wrecks are common in Russia; that as yet insufficient *esprit de corps* is the cause, but that official control is by degrees tightening—the unions themselves taking greater interest in the matter—and that wreckless

service is approaching. I nervously hoped so whenever I rode in Russia.

As for accommodations, unless one took up the matter days before, there was no assurance of getting a berth or private compartment anywhere. In fact, outside of the principal cities, they could not be arranged for beforehand at all. One had to wait until one hour before the train arrived—sometimes a half hour—to find out whether a berth or a compartment was to be had. And because of this, the rush and jam! Pandemonium! Even agony—about the one or two ticket windows set aside for the accommodation of the quite invariably great throng of travelers! But why, I always asked? Are there not many, many people out of work in Russia, and could not more of them be employed in order to speed things up a bit? Wherefore I was told that it was really due to the Russian temperament more than to anything else—the temperaments of the officials as well as the workers. “Sei chass, sei chass!” (Plenty of time; plenty of time!) Yet when it is your time and you must get things done! I marvel now that I am not wholly mad.

I might pause here and expatiate upon the amazing amount of travel in Russia—millions on the march or on the rails, as it were—but just assume that for some mysterious reason (a nomadic strain in the blood, possibly), travel all over Russia is great. Hence most disconcerting, and even dangerous, crushes about all ticket windows! Shouting, screams, struggles at times! People actually weeping or yelling! Most fortunately, it was no part of my duty to look after myself, so I was not involved. But my guides! Their worries! The positive torture which went with their work at times! And all because of absolute incompetence, in so far as I could see, in connection with the government’s management of these matters. Yet

criticism on my part often leading to open quarrels with my vicarious hosts. For who was I? What did I want in Russia anyhow? Who asked me? Why should a fool of a kindly government invite a petty bourgeois critic like myself to come over here and complain? Fortunate was I to be in Russia at all! Whereupon once, and at that, I achieved a loud guffaw.

At times I wondered, and feared for the Communistic program as a whole.

And as for cleanliness—or the lack of it, rather—the sluggish indifference of the average Russian to conditions decidedly not pleasant and yet easily remediable—well, in most instances, it was amazing! And, so irritatingly un-American as I saw it. The Russian house, yard, street, lobby, toilet, hotel rooms, often the offices, not sufficiently looked after, sometimes positively unclean. Usually everywhere on earth, you will have poverty offered as an excuse, but never effectively in Russia, I fear—not now, at least. For downright poverty is taboo there, is it not? At any rate, there are people in Holland, Germany, France, England, as poor as these Russians but you would never find them tolerating the conditions which in Russia seem to be accepted as a matter of course.

And while we are on this topic, I may as well add that this lack of cleanliness applies to boats and railways as well as to houses, hotels, back yards, etc. . . . In fact, in connection with their boats and trains I often complained of dirty floors, dirty windows, toilets a disgrace, no towels, no soap, no paper. In fact, I have certainly ridden over half of that gigantic land and never once was I in a railway carriage that I felt was properly scrubbed or sanitized—the carpets, cushions, hangings adequately suction-dusted—although the equipment for so doing might be in

the car itself. (Plenty of time! Sei chass! The car will be cleaned thoroughly when it gets to the station.) But even there, not cleaned. But on the next trip, certainly, ah, yes! Be sure and make the next trip! But if you did, it would be the one after that that was to see the cleaning process. And this was as true of the International Car (the Russian equivalent of a European wagon lit), as of the "Maxim Gorki," the poorest, although not necessarily the dirtiest, of all cars in Russia. As for the second-class carriages, they are supposed to be fitted with clean bedding (sheets, a pillow and a blanket), which for a rouble or two you are assumed to be able to secure at any station. (So the Commissar of such things at Moscow will tell you.) But try and get it! "We have bedding—oh, yes—but not to-night." Or: "There is no bedding on this line." So passengers, entitled to service for which they could and would, if they could get it, pay, compelled to sleep in their clothes, four in a compartment. And should they complain (which usually they do if they are not Russians), then: "This is Russia, and you must get used to the way we do things here."

Well, one does after a time, only always in my case with thoughts as to the constant palaver about outstripping America, materially or technically, which is forever going on in Russia, even among these trainmen. Making a Paradise out of Russia in a generation or two is one of their dreams. Good Lord, I often thought, if only they would! But not with their temperament! They talk too much and do too little.

And another matter right here in connection with the Russian temperament. It is not merely an assumption but a fact that the Russian worker as yet is poor, not nearly as well supplied with this world's goods as he should be. And in this connection (and especially if he were in any

way related to the American in spirit), most certainly he would be alive to any little chance of making money, would he not? Well, the trains are crowded in Russia (all of the one hundred and sixty-seven nationalities going here and there), and those in "first" and "second" certainly expecting to pay for any little service done them. But do you think the Russian porter (who, by the way, has not only a compartment of his own, with a bed and a place to keep his clothes, but a little office or pen) takes advantage of his opportunity and the space at his disposal to carry a few canned things, hot coffee or tea, cold meats, cigars, cigarettes, or drinks, on which he could take a neat profit? He does not! He will ride from one to twelve days (as in the instance of the Trans-Siberian Express), with the same passengers, all desiring by turns all of these things—since in most instances there is no diner and one must alight at certain stations to obtain anything—but never once will he think or wish to offer anything on which he could make a real profit. That, of course, would entail energy, "stepping lively," "getting a move on"—and also, of course, calculating, which last may possibly be the one thing he does not want to or cannot do. I puzzled over it much, because unquestionably he needs the money.

And as for the hotels . . . Heaven . . . ! Whatever they were in the Czar's day (and I hear they were numerous and good enough), now, for the most part at any rate, they are poor in quality—in not a few instances tatterdemalion. In Moscow and Leningrad they are better, the Hotel Europe of Leningrad being quite clean and well looked after. Most of them outside of these two cities are old and whatever practical or artistic equipment they may have enjoyed under the Czaristic régime has long since been dissipated or worn so threadbare that it is pathetic to gaze upon. Carpets and rugs and tapestries with holes

worn through. And too often the curtains and hangings thick with dust. No bed linen or coverings worthy of the name. One sheet, or none. (I used to call them "One-Sheet Hotels.") No pillow-cases. In some not even a mattress—except for a price. You were expected to bring your own! And as for a bath or washstand with running hot and cold water . . . dream not dreams! You are in Russia, where water at all times apparently has been either scarce or difficult to get and handle—difficult because of cold and ice and riverless steppes. In consequence, it is quite frequently absent or dealt out to you in such minute quantities that you groan because of the physical neglect that must ensue. Even in the best hotels of Moscow and Leningrad there is all too often no more than a washstand with a tiny tank behind it into which is emptied perhaps as much as a bucket of water a day. And unless you devote your shining hours to complaints and insistencies, such will remain your allotment. And as for towels, well, most people furnish their own towels. But if you insist one may be had—also an extra sheet sometimes, but charged on the bill. Also a heavy charge for preparing the bath—two roubles, or one dollar, in most instances, and said bath a mile or so down a hall—and the same not heated—which means building a fire under a special heater—a tip for that. And often, even then, no soap!

But when it comes to the bill, these Communists shine! How they can charge! It must be a gift! For mind you, despite traveling officials and invited specialists from abroad and the essential movements of a people that desires above all things to outstrip America, they still look upon a hotel, apparently, as an evil, bourgeois device, designed to undermine and destroy the poor workingman. For is it not true that slimy capitalists, or NEP-men, creatures who are fattening upon the working blood of the country, are

inclined to gather in these same, with their wives or mistresses, and gorge and dance evil jazz dances! Verily! Selah! So up with the prices! Tax the bloodsuckers so that they will shun these places as they would the tax office itself! Put G. P. U. men in restaurants and hotel lobbies to see who comes and goes and what illegal wealth is being concealed. In consequence, barns of hotels three-fourths empty, with indifferent government employees at the door whose chief interest is in your passport. Do you want a really good room? Well, you must make it perfectly plain, for of what interest is it to a clerk who receives only 75 or 100 roubles a month to make money for a hotel which is owned and run by the government? None at all! Hence you are shown rooms over which you sigh in despair and turn from in disgust. But why kick? Where will you find anything better? You are in Russia, a nation that has lunatic notions as to what constitutes undue comfort or privilege. Yet daily and hourly dreaming and palavering of comfort and privilege for all. "But when?" I used to ask. "And if ten, or twenty, or fifty years hence, as you say, why not a bit of it now?" "Ah, but we cannot afford it. We are too poor as yet." "Not too poor, surely, to have a clean hotel, or to cook well the food you do have."

And speaking of food! Oh, do allow me! It will comfort me a little after all the stuff I ate. There is almost no such thing as good cooking in Soviet Russia. In hotels and restaurants, I mean. In homes, likely enough. But in hotels and restaurants they appear to know nothing about it. My one thought in connection with this was that during or after the revolution they either killed or chased out of the country every person who could cook—because, after all, is not cooking a bourgeois art—a thing fostered by multi-millionaires, capitalists, and bloodsuckers generally?

So out with them! Off with their heads! And so no cooks—only peasants or workers who are just learning to cook. Hence, it is not surprising that in most places they know little of spices, savories, sauces, condiments. All they seem to know at present is borsch (cabbage soup) or its correlates, and wretchedly cooked chicken, pork, beef. As for omelettes, you groan when you think of France!

But the Russian is not the American (U. S. A.). He is not even the European. Indeed, I take him to be a semi-Asiatic temperament. And because of this, different! They think nothing of living, in the new and sometimes really beautiful (exteriorly, I mean) and always enormous apartment houses or flats for workers, four, five, seven, even ten, in a single room. I have seen this! And to your honest American horror and astonishment, the housing committees of the different factory workers' unions or co-operatives which build these things for their members still consider that one single toilet for fifteen people living in a three-room apartment is ample. Also one bathtub for, say, forty people. For who in Russia wants a bath more than once a week, anyhow? They prefer, if anything, the public baths, or so I was told. More sociable.

Again, it is no hardship for a Russian woman to take her turn with one or two or five or ten other Russian women at cooking her required meals on the one or two stoves provided in a communal kitchen. That is sociable, too. Better, it is Communistic. Besides, it gives her a chance to gather round with her neighbors, trade all the news, see what Sophia Grigorovna Nikitina is having for dinner, and discuss the prospects for Russia being attacked by the whole world any day now! As for time, what is time for if not for group conversations and festivities such as this? And as for privacy, a delicate sensitivity to individualistic moods, tush! Is not every man

and woman a comrade? And isn't a crowd the most interesting thing in the world?

I am reminded, in this connection, of a visit to the apartment of Herr Meierhold, the director of the Meierhold Theater, one of the principal theaters of Moscow. He lives, or did when I was there, in a large and handsome house assigned to him and his artistic, technical and financial staffs after the revolution. This great house has many rooms, including a kitchen, several baths, and one grand salon, say, thirty by fifty feet. Yet in two rooms and a bath of this same building, or palace, live Mr. and Mrs. Meierhold and a little Primus stove which permits of breakfasts, lunches, even dinners, in their rooms. Other rooms, or suites of two—but principally single rooms—in the same building have been assigned to some of the leading actors and actresses of the Meierhold staff. And in the general kitchen they have a private pantry to which they or their maids may repair and cook, or maybe each has a Primus and dishes and pans of his own in his separate room. Also private bedding. In which case he is more exclusive—hence bourgeois.

But in the great salon, what? A general assembly room, where the art of the theater may be discussed? Tush! Some twenty beds or cots, each with a dresser to the left as one lies, a dresser containing one's earthly outfit. And each cot representing the home or quarters of an actor or staff member, for the government, be it remembered, considers one mansion for a manager and his entire staff quite sufficient. I have seen all sorts of organizations housed that way—a local telegraph manager and his staff in one house; a local telephone ditto, the same; a local shipping director and his staff—and so on, all crowded, packed like sardines, in a single building—rooms, offices, workshops, all.

But to return to Mr. Meierhold. To and fro go the members of his grand family—to the kitchen, the bath, the writing room, or the special chamber or chambers of the more important members—each one crisscrossing the steps of the other, each one achieving what, if any, privacy? Lord, I exclaimed! But neither in my distinguished host nor any member of his organization could I discern the least trace of self-consciousness in regard to all this. Russia. Government orders. The new social order. You might as well expect self-consciousness in a general and his staff encamped in a field.

But do you think I am quarreling with them? Not a bit! I may and do "kid" them a little, but I was never farther from quarreling with any people in my life. They appeal to me. I like them. I forgive them all their sins of omission and commission, even their bad food and paucity of water. I couldn't live as they do, but also they would never ask me to. They seem instinctively to sense, even in their group moods, that some people are like them and some are not. And they respect the point of view of those who are not, as they respect their own. And the deepest impression I took, even from Russians who were not Communists, was that the idea of an experiment of this kind was not so disagreeable. Most, indeed, seemed to be so mentally diverted by the vast changes affecting all Russia that they were willing to suspend judgment even after ten years.

Hence should one, because of all of this, criticize? I think not. I am sure not. It may be that in ten or fifteen years more, or, say, in twenty-five or thirty, at the most, when all that the modern world knows of equipment shall have been put before Russia by its present leaders and workers, there will have appeared a newer, more restless, more seeking temperament, one that will be as sensitive

to all of the niceties of western material life as any westerner anywhere. A Russian friend of mine, whose opinions and observations I have quoted elsewhere in this book, sees in the present generation the beginning of a new race, extremely realistic—a people without the idealism of their fathers. He states that the majority of the young people no longer enter the faculties of pure science but choose instead the medical and polytechnic course, and that they prefer sports to Dostoiievsky. I know positively that they prefer Ethel M. Dell, Zane Grey and Rex Beach to their Golden Age authors. Their sales prove it.

Well, pre-war Russia paid no attention to physical education, while Soviet Russia is specializing in it, and through the trades unions and other organizations millions of young Russians are now engaged in the various fields of sport.

And, though I repeat that the Russia I saw was, in the main, slow, backward, inclined to meditate too much, to trudge or stand in a resigned sort of way, I also saw everywhere, at the same time, signs of things that must surely tend to shake and wake them out of this lethargy. Assuredly, they should and will come a little way down from the upper stories to the more practical floors below, just as Americans should and let us hope will leave the tenth floor once in a while and go on up and take a look around.



CHAPTER.V

THE CURRENT SOVIET ECONOMIC PLAN

THE Soviet State, as I understand it, is really a Super-Trust, controlling every form of production and manufacture; granting concessions only to this or that firm or individual when it sees a need for doing so or feels its own inability to handle a particular branch of business or the need of foreign capital to develop something—yet always retaining control of credits and foreign trade. In this sense, then, the Government is at once manufacturer, salesman, and consumer, for it buys and sells as well as consumes the things it makes. It claims that last year the profits from industries were something over 500,000,000 roubles. But to realize these profits it had to charge prices for industrial products from five to fifty per cent higher than was charged for the same articles abroad. It could, of course, if it desired, sell its products abroad at a loss—and does, at times. With this money it is then able to purchase such products as it cannot manufacture and sell them inside Russia at prices sufficient to make up the loss.

At present anyhow, concessions of land are granted to

capitalists for agricultural or mining exploitation or for fur-hunting, fishing, and the like. Concessions are granted also for importing or exporting certain goods. Though the concessionaires work under less favorable conditions than those enjoyed by the various Government enterprises now engaged in supplying Russia the quality of some of the goods produced by the Government makes competition easy—much too much so to suit the mood of the present proletariat of the land. For the concessionaire seeks to offer style and extends credit, whereas the Government does not, as yet, anyhow. It is against luxury, you see. Nonetheless, the concessionaire must be on the alert in the drawing up of the two contracts he is compelled to make—one with the Concessions Committee and one with the labor unions covering labor conditions. For, unless he is unusually shrewd and determined, he is quite certain to be compelled to pay higher wages and a higher rate of interest than does the Government, and is liable to meet with all sorts of difficulties in marketing his goods. For the Government always undersells where it can and with a view to driving out the concessionaire as soon as possible! Worse, the Government has repeatedly been charged by certain concessionaires with not permitting sufficient investigation before exacting a signature to concessions the details and terms of which it has outlined. An instance of this is the Harriman manganese concession, which after three or four years of a checkered and unprofitable existence is about to withdraw. But there are others which have made enormous profits, and I am told that the Soviet Government has never been known to break a contract.

An interview I had with Mikhayan, Commissar of Trade (interior and foreign), will serve to throw some little light on the subject, I hope. He is the Commissar who buys for all Russia, first supplying the Government and the Co-

operatives, and then if there is anything left, selling the rest to private business enterprises of various kinds. Yet these private concerns as he told me may nonetheless only buy goods from the Government and are not permitted to buy abroad save and when the materials are for use in plants engaged in the manufacture of something needed by Russia and not for direct resale to any one.

There is, in connection with all this, a definite plan of importation. Since there is not in Russia at the present time enough money to buy all the things needed, let alone what the public might like, the Government, through its Commissar, buys for productive enterprises first; next for the necessities of the people. Luxuries it dispenses with, for the present anyhow. I asked this same Mikhayan whether the Government ever used the policy of stimulating national buying by offering luxuries to the people. To this he replied *No*, also that while the Government already produces many more luxuries than before the war, its hope is that Russia will never be a luxury-consuming country. "For," said he, "luxury can only spell the death of Communism—inspire show, waste, and vain-glory—and those are the things which we hope to avoid." When I asked him whether the Soviet agents bought with the same shrewdness as private agents would exercise, he said yes, and more so, first because they have the advantage of an enormous buying power, next because they are honest Communists interested in the success of Russia and instructed as to its needs.

But when it came to the Russian people themselves and how they should be dealt with, the Government's agents had very different instructions. The object here is not to make any more money for the Government than is necessary to run the Government, nor to pay any less than will content the people. The Government buys grain products

from the peasants. There are two or three great organizations which buy special articles, like cotton. In connection with this there is a price plan which is strictly adhered to. A certain level must be maintained—not too high, which would be hard on the worker, and not too low, which would ruin the peasant. Mikhayan told me that for the past two years at least prices had remained stationary in Russia because economically the Central Government had considered this best.

Asked whether the Government demanded a profit above wages and upkeep, he said yes, a minimum profit, in order to maintain a sinking fund for emergencies—war, famine, new developments, etc., but not an overflowing treasury, by any means, as in some lands. On the contrary, just enough. From the grain trade alone last year, for instance, there was an income of 700,000,000 roubles and only 8,000,000 profit. The Government took only an amortization from the profits of industry and forty per cent from the profits of State organizations, in order that the national operations of the country might be conducted economically.

The Government itself, he said, does not deny that mistakes have been made in the operation of its economic plan, but for the purpose of rectifying all discoverable errors and suggesting remedial measures the R. K. I. (Workers' and Peasants' Inspection) had been appointed, which has full power to inspect anything and everything as well as the power to dismiss, close, prosecute, or do whatever is necessary to bring a failing or disorganized or mismanaged industry into line with the general Government's or the people's best interests. However, from my own observation as well as the opinions of many with whom I talked, I am led to conclude that the progress made in

the industrial system is remarkable when considered in connection with all of the circumstances existing.

One of the factors contributing toward this are the Coöperatives, or organizations composed of consumers who employ executives to buy wholesale and sell retail for them. These now occupy an important position in the general economic scheme of Russia to-day. They did so, however, as many as thirty-five years ago. But the important difference now is that they constitute the main channel of distribution for the commodities produced in the State enterprises, whereas only a few years ago—in the first days of Lenin—the Government was against them. Now the Government is for them, behind them, seeks to reach and aid the people through them. They are therefore a great aid in the presentation and distribution of all new and helpful things. They seek no profit and extend all over Russia. The factory and office workers, for instance, have their coöperatives; the artisans and craftsmen have theirs; the peasants theirs; even the hunters and fishermen in Siberia have theirs also. The Government, while conducting its own shops and stores, favors the Coöperatives with lower taxes and other privileges, in order that the people may be sure that the best that can be done for them is being done.

Not only that but the handsomest stores I have seen this side of California and New York, as I have said, I saw in Russia, and owned and operated by these same coöperatives—exquisitely appointed stores and full to overflowing with a very wide variety of things. I saw these in Novo-Sibirsk. Novgorod, Baku and Batoum, Odessa, Rostov, the Don Basin, or where you will, but always new and handsome and tending to drive out the old tatterdemalion if picturesque markets or bazaars as they are called everywhere in Russia.

Klimokon, Vice-President of the All-Russian Coöperatives, told me that the Coöperatives cover fifty per cent of the trade. He places the State trade at twenty-eight per cent and private trade at twenty-two per cent. However, private trade is decreasing, since the State encourages the Coöperatives to take over all collective buying and retailing, thus eventually driving the Government out of business—which is what it desires. Prices in Co-operative stores are standard, and while high, the private stores ask still more. When necessary—that is, in order to oust private traders—the Consumers' Coöperatives proceed to sell below cost.

These private traders, or NEP-men (*New Economic Policy*), as they are called, while hampered in this way by heavier taxes, higher rents, and fewer labor privileges, nevertheless manage as I have said to make some money. This is because as a rule they are shrewder traders than the Coöperative executives and have better buying taste—an eye for luxury, say. Also they know all the tricks of trade and are much more willing to practice them. Also to give long, long credits, whereas the Coöperatives are not willing to do this. The masses know this and hate them accordingly, the while the individualist patronizes them. Your true Communist considers the NEP-man a snake who is trying to undermine the success of Communism. Also he fancies him—(whether truly or not I do not know)—rich, whereas your Communist is poor. Yet in the face of all this, they are still compelled to patronize him for certain commodities, because all too often these they cannot obtain elsewhere. It is the NEP-man who hurries here and there, and by devices which are always suspect, obtains exceptionally interesting goods, which somehow the Coöperatives do not always manage to offer. But why that is I could not find out.



CHAPTER VI

COMMUNISM—THEORY AND PRACTICE

BUT, have I been converted to Communism? No, not to the brand that is operating in Russia at this time. (Of course, all official Communists explain to you that true Communism has not yet arrived; that the dictum of Marx, father of the present experiment, or whoever invented this slogan, much quoted by all Communists—"From each according to his ability; to each according to his need"—is something to be approximated, not necessarily achieved.)

But why not? Is Communism all wrong? Far from being all wrong, I consider, as I have said, many of its aspects and developments to be very much right and progressive, and if it were in my power so to do I would this day dispatch to Russia as large a number as possible of present-day American and English enthusiasts for things as they are—the rankest individualists, say, of America, England, France, Germany, in politics and out—in order that they might observe for themselves and come to understand that something besides unlimited private rights for the strong and capable—their privileges, pleasures, etc.,—is possible, and not only possible but in Russia actually

in existence and, with modifications, likely to endure. One of the things they would have to look upon, if not mentally accept for themselves (and which would cause many to return in a state of high dudgeon, vowing that Russia is upside down), would be the enjoyment by labor of a maximum of consideration or privilege consistent with the economic success of the country as a whole.

I myself, ordinarily most sympathetically inclined toward the underdog and the minor individual everywhere, was inclined, and still am, to decide that a little too much was being done for labor and too little for the brains necessary to direct it; that labor was being given an undue share of the fruits of the land; and that the elimination of the old-time creative or constructive business man, with all that his self-interest and consequent industry, ingenuity, etc., implied, was likely to result in a kind of slowness or seeming indifference or quiescence which would not be likely to work out for the best interests of all concerned. And as one goes about any city or town apart from Moscow, where naturally center most of the political and official if not exactly mental opportunities of the country at this time, there is to be noted just this ease or slowness, not to say indifference. In factories, in order to speed up production and prevent slack, piece-work is the rule. But in offices, on trains, in stores, you will find that ease which one might expect in a society from which the urge and tang of competition has been extracted.

But is this best? Wise? Can society endure unless everybody works, and works hard? Coming from America, where nearly everybody works and likes to—in order to pass the time—and in consequence piles up an amazing amount of material possessions, I, for one, was inclined to quarrel with this slowness and predict this, that and the other fatal result for Russia. Yet why, exactly? Must

we have or do we need really all the speed and energy and material plethora which is now being heaped up before us in America? Might we not do with less and are we not already a little weary of too much of everything and sighing for a simpler, less plethoric state of affairs? I, for one, am beginning to think so.

And so, after observing these slow, easy-going Russians for a time, I was not so ready to criticize as at first. True, there is a great deal to be done before the actual necessities of Russia are met—before it is brought up to the modern level of living and usage—(I calculate that it is now about three hundred years behind in many ways)—but need it all be done overnight? Cannot a leisurely and wise nation take its time and get quite as much fun out of so doing as we who feel we must hurry so? To be sure, want and warmth and sanitation which means the elimination of disease should not be made to wait. But beyond these, just what? Must they have a rapid increase in population, immense apartment houses and hotels, crowded trains and overstuffed highways, resorts, and places of amusement? I hope not. And so I am in no hurry to see Russia changed in this respect, although they are—the leaders, at least. They all want Russia to be like America—its cities like Chicago and Detroit, its leaders and geniuses like Ford, Rockefeller, Edison and Gary. God! I pray not.

In connection with this, some say that this particular zest and go which a westerner misses was never in the Russian temperament at any time, under Czar or Communist. Others, that its assumed absence is more a seeming than a reality; that the Russians do not look and act the zest which they nonetheless feel. However true this may be, I could never sense such a condition existing. Always and everywhere in Russia (including even Moscow in

part), there appeared to me to be a kind of trudging resignation, based, I felt, on an absence of that "kick" which lies, for so many, in the hope of financial advancement or the dread of failure. For what intellect is so dull that it cannot grasp the significance of financial gain?

And just here, if you will, a few thoughts that then and there troubled me and still do—i.e., that without commercial and political captaincy of a very high order, so vast a problem as the feeding, clothing, housing, education, and pleasuring of 150,000,000 people is not likely to come off; that to make people work hard and intelligently requires something more than the Marxian slogan—All for one and one for all. For can man be made to work as enthusiastically for others as for himself? And if not, can such a huge Communistic experiment as this be made to go? In Russia they will tell you yes, certainly. Pray look about you. Elsewhere in the world, no. Yet is not the temperament of man naturally greedy, cruel, this, that? And unless his evil heart is taken into consideration, will not any society or organism fail? The Russians say yes, unless he is sociologically reëducated. But this reëducation they propose to effect through the child now in their hands and à la the Catholic Church which can make its adherents believe anything. And certainly Christianity as fact is nonsense, and yet look at it! And surely Islamism had nothing much to commend it, mentally or economically. Yet it has endured for how long now? Over a thousand years! And there are those who will say of Catholicism, of Christian Science, of Shintoism, that each is drastically false, puerile, or insane—yet as organisms, theories of personnel, government, each has succeeded. Hence why not Communism?

Yet, as you and I might ask—who under heaven or under Communism, I might better say, is to determine

the ability of each according to his skill; who fix his need and hence his reward? Is Edison to be paid the same as a swineherd? Rockefeller or Gary no more than a steel-puddler? Well, in Russia at this hour, some such attempt is under way. Monsieur Stalin, the voice and directing spirit of the present Communist Central Committee (which is the directing spirit of all of the soviets and unions in Russia at this hour) receives for himself 225 roubles per month (about \$112) plus three rooms in the Kremlin, now the seat of government. And Monsieur Tchicherin, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, no more. Lunacharsky, the Minister of Education, with perhaps as great a power for good or evil as any man in Russia or the world (since he controls and checks all the sources of education—schools, courses, books, newspapers, motion pictures, the stage, the educational programs of the radio), receives no more! In fact, I could find no one in any high position who received a penny more, although many of them, in connection with their official duties, are furnished with a car or cars, one or two or ten or twenty secretaries, an apartment, special means and equipment for transportation—but all incidental to their labors, of course. Yet among the Communist workers I could not find any who were earning less than 50 roubles and thousands upon thousands who were receiving 150, 175, 200, 225 or more! Actors, producers, singers, dancers, connected with the official stage of Russia (which is, roughly, the only theater), often receive more—some as high as 600 roubles a month—perhaps, because, unlike so many others, they can leave Russia and succeed elsewhere.

And yet, in the main, the economic plan of the leaders is not so much for a minimum as for an average return or wage, which is to be always the best that can be done under the circumstances. Later on, as things grow better,

wages are to be increased—not for any one class (since classes are to be done away with) but for everybody. And there is never to be any great difference in wages—just enough to make exceptional merit and exceptional skill comfortable according to its needs, but never luxurious as contrasted with the state of any other. In short, there is to be no luxury which any worker with the taste for it cannot literally aspire to out of his wages, which, as nearly as possible, are to be the equivalent of the best.

A queer doctrine, truly, as we westerners see it, and yet, once you are in Russia, comprehensible after a fashion, though never logical as life goes. For try as I would, even there, I could not quite conceive how people are to be made equal in mental significance however equal they may be made in means. Personally, I am dubious of the result because I cannot even conceive of a classless society any more than I can conceive of life without variations and distinctions. It is these same which give us our sense or illusion of reality, and without these there is no reality.

Let me illustrate. We are here in Moscow now, let us say. And here comes a street cleaner, or a hotel porter, or a droshky driver, or the manager of a small store for the Government. And he may be as well, or as poorly, dressed as Mr. Stalin or Mr. Bukharin, and paid as much. And his rights and privileges under the new system are the same as those of any other. But does all this make him in your eyes, or mine, or those of any discriminating Russian of any mental rank whatsoever, the equivalent of any of the really significant people in Russia? Try and think it! Or go there and try and see or feel it! It is not so! Orders, hierarchies, and powers, however completely stripped of financial significance, have not disappeared. The human mind cannot be Communistically or otherwise equalized or pro-rated at birth however much

later it may be humanized or restrained by law or dogma. And right here is the rub—for Communism insists that it desires to free and strengthen the human mind. Fine. Yet in the same breath you are assured that the human mind is to be reëducated or guided or what you will toward the true light which is Communism. All for one—one for all. No social discrimination of any kind. But there are and will remain social discriminations. And the same not based on wealth but power or mental ability. For, look you, in Russia a learned scientist is still a learned scientist, and kowtowed to as such. An ordinary doctor the same. A statesman the same. Try and see Mr. Stalin, Mr. Lunacharsky, Mr. Rykov, Mr. This, Mr. That of the reigning powers! Or seek an introduction to one of the directors of the great theaters, the State moving picture organizations, the directors of libraries, universities, or any writer of fame! You will find what I found, and exactly what you will find anywhere—that Communism or no Communism, it is brain, or cunning, or both—that mysterious something called ability or personality and which same you cannot distribute by law or force—that makes all the difference between who is respected and who is not,—who is sought after and who is not, who is in authority and who is not, in Russia, as elsewhere. According to all of the Communistic leaders, there are to be no classes. But look about you and see. With one exception here are all of the classes you have ever known anywhere,—professional, scientific, social. The only one that appears to be missing is the moneyed class. And you are likely to find the equivalent of that even here—moneyless—to be sure, but still in possession of the one thing that its former wealth represented, power and position.

Nonetheless in Moscow one hears so much of this remarkable economic system being worked out among all of

the 167 nationalities of the immense commune. Only, going forth one is confronted by the above indisputable facts, and all over Russia. And not only that but apart from the officials, technicians, leaders and so on, the major portion of the population not only poor, but insufficiently clothed, as yet; not any too much heat; inadequate and certainly, from a western point of view, uncomfortable transportation for the masses; few modern vehicles, such as busses, automobiles and trucks; no furniture anywhere worthy of the name; insufficient and certainly not as yet comfortable housing; very few public roads; not enough schools as yet; not enough places of amusement; all forms of commodities, from bread, tea, meat, grains, down to clothing and utensils, not too plentiful by any means and usually of the commonest or simplest and most utilitarian quality and character—yet high in cost and poor in quality; unemployment still great (200,000 in Moscow, 160,000 in Leningrad, and other cities in proportion); beggars; and in Leningrad, Moscow and other cities prostitution among women of the old order either unequipped or unwilling to meet the new conditions.

On the other hand, one must consider the condition of these people in the days of the Czar, and, worse yet, since the close of the World War and the revolution. Hunger, death for millions by starvation; no pre-war housing or lighting system worthy of the name; no roads, telephone or telegraph communication beyond those fixed and limited by the old military and commercial régime; no educational or social program for the masses to speak of; oppression, high taxes, lords and slaves. And shot through all this, as it were, the world-old Asiatic fatalism that meets change or death with indifference. Then there is the, in the main, treelessness of this vast country for hundreds and even thousands of miles in given directions; the fencelessness

of it, for with the fewest exceptions there are no fences anywhere. The peasants find their allotted acreage about as a dog finds his bone. They know by faint markings or by instinct where their lines begin and end on the smooth, treeless steppes.

On the other hand, also, the world should remember that for Russia the technique of so great a thing as a communistic State is something still to be learned, and is still hourly being studied. "Last year we did so and so, but found it wouldn't do. Too expensive, or conflicted with such and such a thing." It is not enough that the Government should take over the railroads, post office, telegraph, telephone, public roads, land, houses, stores, manufactories, but it must manage them in such a way as to avoid waste, make a profit, keep one industry from conflicting with another and still sell to the individual at such a price that he will never be charged too much nor favored so much that his healthy personal industry and interest will be stultified. And since this has never been done by any one Central Government before, said Government has something to learn, has it not? Hence when you begin to look into things you may and do find waste and graft. (I can furnish a long list of investigations and exposures.) But there is also a series of checks and balances quite reasonably and recently devised. I have mentioned the R. K. I. Workers' and Peasants' Inspection. By it the great industries and organizations are contrasted as to service, profit and population dealt with. And always, everywhere, an official investigator may enter, call for the books, interview the workers, discharge, promote, order changes in expenditures, or, should the whole industry seem unwise or persistently unprofitable, abolish it entirely. And from this decision there is no appeal.

Truly an enormous problem. And not easily met. Yet

never have I seen more genuine optimism, even enthusiasm, on the part of both worker and peasant, even on the part of a large percentage of the intelligentsia, who whether they willed it or not at first now find themselves in the present scheme of things. For already much, very much, has been accomplished. Telegraph, telephone, the radio for all Russia—the smallest village as well as the largest cities—and various thoroughly equipped automobile or railroad lines extending into many hitherto unopened directions. And, in so far as Russia as a whole is concerned and as the Government revenues will permit, every possible device, public and private, in industrial, commercial, private and official life, is already actually there or in process of introduction. And yet, by turns, and according to what one is looking at or thinking about at the time, one can become either abnormally optimistic or deeply depressed. I sometimes believe it is truly so with all in Russia, even the leaders of the Communist Party.

In illustration of what I mean, let me cite examples. I am going to Tula, a fairly large city near Moscow, 150 versts away. My watch is wrong and we all but miss the train. As my Soviet guide and I hurry down the platform, it is already pulling out. We jump on the last car of a third- and fourth-class train—no other coaches on this one—and they are all terrible, only at the next station we can change. Running, I manage to catch the handle of what looks to me like an American box car with some small dirty windows cut into it, but all tightly closed. Inside it is packed—about one hundred and fifty people, men and women. But what people! I choke as I enter, for not only is the car full of vile smoke but of indescribable odors—odors, for instance, from dirty old sheepskin coats worn by these travelers these many years, the wool inside, the outside black with dirt! And of unwashed feet, with ancient

wool socks over them. Or bare and often protruding from the ends of a line of wooden bunks or shelves three-high, the lowest near the floor and the highest close to the ceiling, as in a jail or inferno. At each end of the car only a small candle in a glass. I groan, for I am so wedged in that I cannot move. And no seats, no ventilation, only noise, the rattle of the train and the guttural conversation. I can scarcely distinguish the passengers for the smoke and shadow. To my right, an evil-smelling peasant is leaning against another man who is lying down and eating from a loaf of black bread. To my left a man is fumbling in his bundle, presumably clothes, a pickle in his hand.

"Look out for your purse and watch," warns my guide. "Thieves ride on this train occasionally."

"But what for? Whom would they rob?" And then, "Are there many such cars in Russia?"

"Ten ahead. They are on all lines, carry the bulk of the traffic."

"Not really!"

"Yes, thousands. This and third-class. That's a little better—not so many bunks."

"But I thought they had good railroad service here."

"They have, for those who can pay for it, or the Russians think they have. This is Asia, not the United States, remember. And they don't take it as sadly as you do. They are pretty well satisfied because it is cheap. Besides, they will have to be educated up to something better."

"And are they being so educated?"

"Yes, but it takes time. The educational program is only five years old as yet."

I looked about again, coughing. Sure enough, these stocky, sweaty, smelly bodies are disposed in lines of comparative comfort.

"And where are they all going?"

"Oh, Kharkov, Rostov, Tyapsee. This is a through four-day train."

"Four days in this car!"

"Very likely."

"No bath, no chance to take off their clothes and rest any better than this?"

"No."

I was half sick and quite convinced that Russia was a total loss. No matter that at the next station I was transferred to a comfortable compartment in a clean, third-class car. I could not change my point of view so soon.

But the very next day, in another city of 150,000, clean and new-looking houses, new factories, and fairly good stores; a new street car line, electric lights, busses, not bad-looking droshkies and taxis and considerable commercial activity. A seemingly clean, brisk city. Yes, I liked the city, and felt encouraged. Russia was not quite doomed as yet.

But then en route to an old monastery where I was to spend the night, a low peasant village, half hidden in the snow.

"There are a hundred and twenty millions of peasants in Russia, and some six thousand villages not unlike this one," volunteered my guide. "I know this one, for I was born near here. You want to see the worst as well as the best. Come on, and I'll show you the peasant at his lowest."

So into a peasant hut, occupied by an old man and his wife, their son and daughter-in-law and three children of this younger couple—seven in all. And besides these, a cow and a goat and their droppings. And the room not more than fifteen feet square—a stove in one corner, an

earthen floor with straw on it, on which perhaps the patriarch slept. And for the rest bunks, platforms fastened to the sides of the walls. And in one corner, away from the cow and the goat, a table with some dough on it for bread and a samovar for tea. Also candles, and an ikon or two. But the windows sealed up for the winter. And thick, smelly shubas (goatskin or sheepskin coats). And on the wall, cockroaches without number.

"Well," said my guide as we came out, "there you are! That hut is typical of our poorest peasant. I will not say they have no brains—they are shrewd enough—but for centuries past they have had no education, and so, as yet, not much initiative or invention. But the next generation—we are all waiting for that—the older ones to die off." He paused—then added: "The trouble with Russia now is (as yet, I mean), that there are hundreds of thousands like these. I won't deny it. And they are in opposition to the new program largely because it is different, means change and effort. But they will die some day. Besides, most of them live better than this right now." (Then he showed me two more huts just as bad.) "But don't forget," he added, "that only a mile from here is a Government agricultural station, with a tractor and a fire engine and a milk separator and a combination reaper and thresher, and pedigreed cows, horses, and pigs, from which Russia is to be restocked and the latest theories and ideas as to farming—intensive farming. But how to get at these fellows! Not so easy! In some cases, though, even now they are receptive, interested and hopeful."

And from what I saw I agreed, for they followed us here and there with open eyes, and some of them talked volubly to me in Russian, though I could not understand. And when I visited the local soviet (in a log cabin such as we knew in America a hundred years ago), I saw for

myself that here was a new and vital center of political and social ideas and that it was directed by earnest young Communists trained in the dreams and theories of the leaders of the party at Moscow. Here were classes for political and economic education, agricultural, industrial, ideological. And here, in this ancient village of huts in the midst of a vast field of snow, was stirring a movement which was intended to teach these people to lift up their heads, not to be afraid, not to submit to wrongs or evil but to fight, to demand and achieve a fair reward for their efforts, to learn of science and practical material achievement. And as you looked at the little huts and the vast and practically uncultivated fields and forests, and thought of the thousands of gilded churches with their ikons and gold and the comfortable priests of an earlier day teaching these people tame and unthinking submission to an indifferent and parasitic aristocracy, you said all hail to these Communist dreams of a better day! They may be all wrong as to what man is like or what they can do with him in the matter of brotherly relations. But what of it? At least by this process they are likely to acquire a working knowledge of what is doing in the modern world and that is worth something—spells great things for the future of this nation, I think.

Indeed, that same Russian friend of mine whom I have so frequently quoted, insists that these Communists, while calling themselves materialists, are the greatest Utopians and fanatics of the modern epoch; that they are the children, though hating their parents, of the old Russian idealists of literature and history. Well, maybe, but at least they are sensitive to the vast and cruel differences that come about—God knows how or why!—between masses and individuals, and are determined, for the time being, anyhow—they think permanently—to be rid of

them. And with that much of their program (undue difference between classes) I agree, and nothing will ever make me believe that thus far they have not brought about enormous changes for the better.

But, as I say, as yet the reality is so different to the dream. I could keep on and offer you a thousand contrasts, due, in part, to shortages—of money, supplies, goods of all kinds. They have not the machines, the equipment, the implements, the books, the roads, the cars, the manufactured supplies, not even sufficient trained workers. And yet, not a city, not a village or hamlet in all Russia to-day that is not feeling the thrill of the new intellectual and social life emanating from the leaders and theorists at Moscow. In God's name, may they not try for a better day?



CHAPTER VII

PROPAGANDA PLUS

ONE of the most amazing, and, at times, disagreeable, phases of life in Russia as I saw it was the endless outpour and downpour of propaganda, not only in regard to the principles and practices of Communism as organized and interpreted by Marx, Engels, Liebknecht, Lenin, Trotzky and others, but in the same breath the modernization and industrialization as well as defense from foreign attack of all the Russias from Poland to the Pacific, the Arctic to Afghanistan. Overnight, as it were, the leaders at Moscow and all their enthusiastic disciples and followers would like to educate, train, house and modernly equip all of these fine Russians! And so schools, schools, schools. And factories wherever they can get the money and the machinery wherewith to equip them. And barracks, barracks, barracks, and soldiers, soldiers, soldiers, always marching and singing or being trained somewhere. And on top of all this, books, books and pamphlets by the millions. And most, not all, relating to propaganda in one form or another. (For Zane and Ethel and Rex have arrived. So fear not.) Talk about our American adver-

tising programs! Really, I never saw its equal anywhere,—almost a nightmare of propaganda.

The first posters I came upon were on the Russian-Polish frontier, in the border station at Negoralje. The station walls were plastered with them. And when I questioned a fellow-traveler—a most agreeable and mentally diversified Belgian, by the way—he explained that they were all of a paternalistic and benevolent character and represented at its best the Government's desire to educate and uplift the masses everywhere.

"And you will never get rid of them," he added, "as long as you are in Russia, anywhere. They will come to haunt you. You will probably get good and sick of them. These here," and he waved an inclusive hand, "are designed to show the peasant what ten years of revolution have done for him. Miles of others, as you go along, will picture what the Communist Government intends or wishes to do, or what the Russian worker or peasant can do for himself. It's the greatest advertising company in the world, I think."

And now I agree, for I never was rid of them. From Leningrad to Tashkent, from Poland to the heart of Siberia, from Odessa to Samarkand, there they are—or were, in every station, hotel, Government post office, Government or coöperative store, factory, office building, theater, home, even, the endless posters of this most ambitious of governments urging (never commanding, really) the people to do this and that, from combing their hair to swatting flies, washing out the stables and milk pails, cleaning the babies' milk bottles, opening the windows of sick-rooms, plowing with tractors, fertilizing with the right fertilizers, building with the right lumber, eating the right food—oh, Lord, hold me! I feel myself spinning around!

One of these posters which this very good Belgian was kind enough to translate for me showed a peasant woman sitting under a hay wagon, her little boy at her feet, reading a book. The legend accompanying the picture set forth news of the fairyland of wonders that the knowledge of reading would bring to those who would only trouble to learn to read. In the background of this same poster, in a small cloud in the distance, glowered the envious, opposed, and threatening figure of the Czar and his royalist friends, all wretchedly caricatured and literally gnashing their teeth, because of the peasant woman's intention to educate herself, I assume.

Another poster in this same station—and one that I found all over Russia—done in flaming red, by the way—showed a massed group of young and valiant Communist workers, guns in hand, bayonets fixed, standing as a red wall against an approaching storm of capitalistic ills, pictured in this instance as a mass of black water overhung by tumultuous and sinister clouds, in their turn composed of greedy and sensuous and selfish faces and eyes and hands. It was quite vivid. Still another presented an accusing finger leveled directly at me, a face behind it. The legend, according to my friend, urged all citizens and peasants to connect with and work for the various local committees for either the uplift of the village or the nation-at-large. We have the same type of poster over here. It usually reads: "This means you!"

But this was a bare beginning. Wherever I went, there they were. Pictures or charts relating to every conceivable type of thing—cooking, washing, exercising, cleaning the house, getting rid of fleas and dirt, packing fruits or vegetables for shipment or preservation; mixing different kinds of grain or vegetables for animal or human food; pruning trees; running the automobile or caring for the horse;

making the right sort of roof for the winter; arranging the right sort of ventilation in summer; showing the right sort of clothing for baby or school child; showing the proper arrangement of a new town; showing methods of building a cellar or a silo—a thousand and one things in connection with the life of the people. I sometimes wondered how the poor Russians made out under it all,—why they were not smothered under the downpour.

For, in addition and all over Russia, in every street and on every other corner, in all of the cities and small towns, and even in the hamlets, stations, post offices and general stores (or Coöperatives, as they are called), hundreds of books, pamphlets, magazines on what and how to do for sale—and costing very little. “How to be a Carpenter.” “How to be a Chauffeur.” “How to be an Engineer.” “Stenography in Ten Lessons.” “Mirakowsky on Draughtsmanship.” “Mirakowsky on Architecture.” “Mirakowsky on Surveying.” “The Principles of Building.” “Soil Diagnosis and Crop Rotation.” “The A B C of Gardening.”

It was amazing, the endless variety of these things, and in the most unexpected places—on a stand outside a church, on Sunday! In all the public markets, next to stands selling pickled pigs’ feet or second- or eighth-hand furniture. One man in Baku had a table of pamphlets resting on the back of a wholly stationary donkey. He had driven it to market with this load. And except for an occasional flick of an ear or a swish of a ropelike tail, no disturbing motion. You might examine the stuff at your leisure. No danger of the store moving off, not even of lying down.

But my purpose is not to laugh, neither to rhapsodize. For propaganda, however valuable to the Russians—and I know it to be a great and valuable thing in this instance—is to the American visitor at least a pest. For all they

are talking about or urging we already have. And at times I could not help wondering whether the Russians themselves did not get a little weary of it. For there is so terribly much of it. You never hear the last of it anywhere. Take the program for industrializing Russia. Lord, the endless pother! Russia must be industrialized. This machine (and here is a picture of it) will do the work of fifteen or one hundred and fifteen men. (And here are the men.) Twenty-five or one hundred such machines in one factory can and will produce so and so many bales of something. (And the bales are shown, and the machine, or a chart with heavy black lines indicating how many machines in how many days or hours will do what.) And these have to hang in every factory, office, depot, market, hotel, or be tacked on the side of every box car, freight station, street car, truck, or what not. Well, guess how much you might like the sight of them after a time! And not only that, but lectures by radio as well as in person in every Red or Lenin Corner throughout the land. And there is no end to Red or Lenin Corners throughout the land. They compete with arc lights and mail boxes.

By the way, these Lenin Corners are used not only for industrial as well as political and educational instruction, but they have a military or national defense meaning as well. For in every apartment house, club, factory, shop, school, or residence, or wherever citizens can be gotten together, the young and old are instructed not only in the doctrines of Marx and the virtues of communal life as practiced in Russia to-day but the dangers of a world war against Russia. Also the need of the masses sticking together, learning to use rifles, bombs, machine guns as well as to practice first aid and self-help in times of disaster. And almost invariably, in the same corners, or nearby in

an adjacent room, practice in all these matters is actually furnished for a half or three-quarters of an hour each day to all who can be induced to come, men and women, girls and boys. And many of the employees of every institution or business do come. It is by now almost a religious duty.

And here quite all are taught, and under glowing pictures of Marx and Stalin and Lenin—no longer any of Trotzky—and cartoons or lithographs, most lurid in color, of enormous, hoglike plutocrats with their fat heels on the necks of chained workers lying at their feet. And other cartoons, usually that one of the Red workers repelling the oncoming horde of plutocrats. And mottoes. Workers of the World Unite! Down with Plutocracy! Remember the White Guards! The Red October! And always some comrade nightly to lecture or explain, firing the masses with pictures of the danger in which they stand. Here also, however, educational programs are undertaken, illiteracy liquidated—lessons on dietetics, sanitation, the care of children, etc., furnished; even lessons in some trade or art delivered. And in addition the radio, with lectures, speeches, songs coming over. Never, never anywhere indeed have I seen the equal of it. There is something strange, almost mystic, in the present fever of these people to consolidate their gains, make themselves sure that what they have attained shall not be taken away from them. And possibly, who knows? Some epochal mystic urge behind or below it all. Who knows?

In this connection I must speak of the press, for while every city and town in Russia has one or more papers, presumably suffered to reflect the news and the political or social changes of the region in which they appear, nevertheless they do not really do so by any means. For *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, two daily papers of

Moscow, and both organs of the Communist Party—and in their turn inspired by the executive heads of the Government, or rather the Communist Party—are again, and from another point of view, the exemplars for every other paper in Russia outside and inside Moscow. What they say—and not only that but the very way they say it—is repeated all over Russia by all of the other papers, yet as original news or opinion. So true is this that in Tiflis, or Tashkent, or Chita, or Perm, wherever you chance to be, you will read—and that from one to ten days after these two Moscow papers have printed them—facts or policies or Government declarations with not a trace of deviation from the opinions expressed in these same papers in Moscow. Communistic team work, one might call this. Only a little dull.

In this connection I took a particular interest in the Communists' repeated declaration that in Russia there was absolute freedom for the press to think and say what it chose—criticize the Communist rule if it chose—and followed it up with many personal inquiries and examinations. That is, I would have the same paper—quite often the same items—read to me by two different assistants at different times, and when they were not together. But at no time did I find any news or criticism or opinion of any kind that was not safely held within the lines of *Izvestia* or *Pravda* and always with the intellectual slant directed by the central group in Moscow. For, as I have said, the Government will not tolerate any unfavorable criticism, not so much of itself as of Communism. Communism can do no wrong.

Worse, in order to control and direct all thought and conclusions, and to bias the same in favor of Communism, no news from within or without Russia may appear which does not tend to glorify the principles of Marx and Lenin,

and by the same token belittle all other theories or principles which in any way conflict. Thus, all news from anywhere else on earth must show that all other governments are really oppressive mechanisms in the hands of capitalists, and constantly being used to betray and enslave labor; also that labor in other lands is oppressed, restless and constantly seeking to free itself from the shackles of capitalism. So every little strike or labor decision, favorable or unfavorable to Communism, or any slump or rise in prices unfavorable to the mass, or any fact in connection with the extravagance or waste of the rich anywhere outside Russia was, as I soon found, played up in the local paper everywhere in Russia as of the greatest significance while at the same time any fact in connection with the industrial or social improvement of the Russian worker in Russia was set forth at length. Could the Catholic Church do better? Has it ever? It is faced, let me tell it, by a new, and, I think, for it, fatal, competitor.

But never, never anywhere, a single word to the effect that anything is wrong or badly done in Russia by the Communists; no complaint of lack or error, say, unless the same chances to be generally known by hearsay or commented on in Moscow in *Pravda* or *Izvestia* or is in process of being remedied, when, of course, it will be the remedial process that will be emphasized.

To tell the truth, after the first month or six weeks I found myself either irritated or bored by this persistent harping on the bright Communistic scene within Russia as opposed to the dark capitalistic world without, when, as any outsider could see, it was so much at variance with the truth. Yet, the Communists, like the capitalists, and the religious organizations the world over are entitled (are they not?) to make their side good—"put it over," as we say. And as between the lies of the British and American

capitalists and their selfish propaganda for purely personal and plutocratic reasons or those of the Catholic Church in regard to its descent and merits and those of the self-sacrificing Communists, I vote for the Communists and am willing to leave the matter there and trust to the future. Of course, from one point of view, this pro-Communistic exaggeration is obviously and often offensively biased or dishonest, but from another not. For there is anti- or underground opposition to Communism in Russia, too, and that has to be met. And when I recalled the various lying and mass-befuddling articles and preachments in regard to Russia foisted by a capitalistic opposition the world over upon an all too gullible citizenry, I knew I had no particular kick coming. One may meet sword with sword, may one not? Besides, I do not charge them with much downright lying and I do insist they have a valuable something which tends to evoke exaggeration to a degree.

In regard to the amusements of the country, however,—theaters, moving pictures, opera—this business of propagandizing as well as censoring, or censoring as well as propagandizing, was not so pleasing to me, its results as I saw them tending to limit or tame the stage in a too disagreeable manner. All the more so because Russia certainly has able producers, both in the legitimate theater and in the movies—Stanislavsky, Meierhold, Tairov, in the theater; Eisenstein and several others in the moving picture world. But the Communists' restless concern for the welfare of the future mind of Russia, their determination to reëducate all of the citizens of the land, young and old, to their way of thinking causes them to insist upon coloring and twisting all art, where possible, to their way of thinking. The result thus far is that there is neither art for art's sake nor knowledge for its own sake in

Russia—any more than there is in the Catholic Church or Christian Science or Mohammedanism. Both are for one purpose, and one purpose only—the confirmation and so establishment of Communism. Thus up to now, in quite all Russian cities, the plays of Strindberg, Ibsen, some of Shakespeare's (such as "Julius Cæsar" or "Macbeth"), Chekov's "Cherry Orchard" and "Three Sisters," a number of Schiller's plays as well as others of Hauptmann, Sudermann and Shaw, are taboo. And, as I said before, for various reasons. Too grim, or too sad, or, according to Communist opinion, celebrating royalty or nobility at the expense of the peasant. My own two plays, "The Hand of the Potter" and "An American Tragedy," were entirely agreeable to Stanislavsky, who would have liked to produce them, but the Communist censors would have none of them. They were, as I heard, too grim.

Again, plays that glorify religion or dwell too heavily on love or sex are mostly taboo, the latter being supposedly beneath the interest of a really concerned Communist—or his disciple—any Russian. And so apart from the opera "Carmen," still being done in different parts of Russia, I saw not one play, and only two second-class movies, dealing with love or sex. These related themes were, as I understood it, considered beneath the interest of a nation called upon to straighten out the economic miseries of the world.

On the other hand, when it comes to what the Communists do want, they are just as annoying and pestiferous, never for an instant losing an opportunity to preach a doctrine or to teach a lesson. Thus in Leningrad I saw one of Schiller's plays, "The Robbers," edited and furnished with a prologue and an epilogue in order to make it teach independence to the rising youth of Russia. In the same city I saw "Uncle Tom's Cabin" with little Eva

left out and Simon Legree shot by a young negro introduced into the play especially for this purpose, who saw it as his duty to avenge the brutal treatment of Uncle Tom and Eliza by Legree. And when I asked the reason I was told that the Russian youth of the day were too tame and needed to be taught independence and opposition to tyranny. Now shouldn't that be telegraphed to Harriet Beecher Stowe?

And in the same way quite all over Russia revolution is lauded while anything which tends to emphasize the submission of one class to another in society is out. In consequence, the stage and cinema abound in pictures of the fighting that took place between the revolutionists and the capitalist classes, but never with any that criticize, let alone satirize, any phase of Communist doctrine.

Again, education, in its most direct or school forms, and being as it is in the hands of the State, is little more than a weapon or machine for the inculcation of the theories of Marx—a means for assuring the stability of the State and for creating a type of human being who will fit in with and continue the theories of Marx. In other words, all education is and must be class-conscious and Marxian. You know the old saw about giving you the child until six or seven years of age and then letting any take him who will. Well, obviously the Communists in Russia like the Catholic Church in the rest of the world, America included, understand, believe, and act on that. Having taken the child out of the hands of the religionist and practically out of the hands of his parents—since they begin with him in the public nurseries and kindergartens—they have decided to inculcate the principles of Communism from the cradle up. And to this end, in all the day nurseries all over Russia, where parents can and (as in the instance of the vast number of workingmen and women who go into the fac-

tories at 7:30 or 8 A.M. and do not return to their homes until 4 P.M. or after) must leave their children while they work, you will find, and this opposite children lying in cradles or still crawling about on their hands and knees, not only red flags hung upon the walls, so that the color and form of the same will presumably become familiar and so a memorable thing, but pictures of Lenin, with a red factory chimney behind him, his working cap awry, his solid, square-toed, working shoes firmly placed upon the hard cobblestone paving, his attitude that of a man about to make an address.

And with that as a beginning, the good work goes on and on, the nurseries, kindergartens and schools being little mills for the grinding out of Reds, desirable or undesirable as they may be. Not a spelling or a reading or a writing or geography or history or grammar lesson or a class exercise or diversion but is connected in some way with Communist theory and practice. For how easy, in connection with the spelling of words and the inculcation of their meaning, to spell and explain a few words directly bearing on Communism and its aims. The word "commune," for instance, or "communist," or "individualist," or "capitalist," or "king," or "idler," or "worker," or "parasite," and how these things or persons are directly connected with the Russian state and its problems. Will the Catholic hierarchy please take note?

And there is the reading lesson, best read from a Communist paper—the *Pravda*, say—with all that that implies. Or the geography lesson, with maps of other countries and the data concerning the same, the forms of government and lives of their people, and the difficulties the same have had with kings and queens, capitalists and idlers who oppressed and enslaved them.

As early as six or seven, I was told, the school children

of Russia to-day begin to listen to talks on current events and facts in connection with Russia's recent history, and by the time they are in the fourth or fifth grade there are regular periods devoted to events in other countries—England, France, China, America—and the social conditions which give rise to these events. And there are, of course, patriotic Communist songs and Communist school societies. Each school also has its “collective,” committee of students elected by the rest to carry out self-management, in which the children are trained by actual example in the processes of soviet government. And, in addition, each school has its Octobrist, Pioneer, and Con-somal organizations, all preparatory for the Communist Party, and these are for kindergarten, grade school, and high school ages.

But, oh, those little schools! In little cabins in the villages, tucked away in the snow and under the bleak, gray sky of Russia! I can see them now, with so many lumbering jackdaws in the trees outside. And the little Russian boys and girls, with their straps of books, coming and going, morning and evening. In a way to-day these same schools are really sub-branches of the Communist Party, with the children graduating from one sub-Communist organization to another until at last, if they can prove themselves worthy of it, they are taken into the Party itself. But what of it? Are not Americans being taught the perfection of capitalism, the Italians that of Fascism, the Spaniards that of Catholicism, and so on. Yet do not believe that the Communist Party is easy to get into! If one is not proletarian-born, one is admitted only after long and severe tests of one's merit and fitness. There are still less than a million Communists in the whole of Russia's 150,000,000 population, and they must have more, of course, in the future.

Also, in connection with the national assumption that Russia, as the head and front of the Communist movement in the world, is called upon to sovietize the world, comes all the serious and gloomy propaganda in connection with that military preparation that is now afoot. For all over Russia there is at present a constant military stirring, which keeps one thinking of war all the time. In fact, you are never done with the sight of soldiers marching or drilling, practicing with machine guns or cannon, or horses or ambulances, stretchers, first aid kits, and what not else that chances to be a part of present-day military training—airplanes for one thing. I saw this wherever I went, and not since the days of Germany before the war have I seen anything quite like it. On the other hand, the general statement reiterated by all officials and Communists, is that there is only a defense army of some 520,000 men, with such equipment, and no more, as is necessary to protect the country. Well, if Russia has an army of only 520,000 men, it is the most effectively distributed and active army that I have ever seen. For in every city and town of any size all over the great empire, but more especially where its borders march with the seas or those of another nation, soldiers, soldiers, soldiers—in Leningrad, Archangel, Perm, Omsk, Tomsk, Irkutsk, and all along the Chinese and Polish frontiers, at Baku and Batoum and Tiflis and Vladikafkaz, between the Black and Caspian Seas, and all along the northern shores of the Black Sea, particularly in Poti, Adler, Suchum, Sochi, Feodosia, Yalta, Sebastopol, and Odessa. And well-clothed and well-armed, too, with barracks, machine guns, cannon, gas masks, bombs, army trucks and trains, airplanes, and what not else.

But most ominous of all, I think, is the additional propaganda which goes with keeping a great nation in the mood and the faith that such a war is inescapable, and

that the very intensive internal labor and accessory preparation is necessary in order for Russia to be ready. Posters, pamphlets, radio talks and lectures by the G. P. U. and others to convince the populace that not only is it necessary to have the army in question, but worse—or better, as you please—a large civilian population—in fact, all the able-bodied men and women who are not in the army—trained to fight or nurse or to help in some other military fashion with the necessary military equipment to take up the struggle along with the army in case Russia is attacked.

And so, as I have said, in every Lenin Corner, or in an adjoining room, a rack or shelf for guns, bombs, gas masks, first aid kits, and I know not what else, all intended as a part of a school or class for war—a local or neighborhood or industrial training in attack and defense.



CHAPTER VIII

THE FORMER CAPITAL OF TYRANNY

ONE of the most interesting phases of my brief invasion of Russia was a short visit to its former capital, St. Petersburg, now dedicated by name, and in spirit, I assume, to the memory of Lenin. And what an arresting northern city—quite light all night long in the summertime, as I was told while there, and certainly early dark in the winter, evening beginning to fall as early as four o'clock, and before that even—the day so brief that you are scarcely astir before the lights are lit in the factories and shops and houses, the brief day being supplemented, in winter at least, by gray or smoke-hued skies. And with principally—or during my stay at least—raw, even icy winds, fog, much mushy and in most of the thoroughfares dirty snow underfoot; and with the shops—because, of course, of the present economic condition of Russia—none too colorful or well-stocked—in the main rather poor and drab looking. Yet as I discovered afterwards, this was true of most cities in Russia, only I came upon the shops of Leningrad first, or nearly so, immediately after I had studied the general character of Moscow.

But how decidedly European this city, as I thought after seeing Moscow. Perhaps the most European of all the cities in the great empire—and there are so many of them. Much more like Stockholm or Vienna or Munich or Paris or Prague than like anything in Russia elsewhere. And justifiably so, since Peter the Great deliberately constructed it (1702-1703 on) to give himself “a window on Europe” and to rival such European capitals as he had seen.

But does it rival them? Except in the matter of climate and the present-day prosperity of other European capitals, I think so. The most arresting thing about it, as I saw it in December, 1927, was the obvious deflation it had suffered since the overthrow of the Czar; the transfer of all of the capital functions of the Government from its principal national buildings to those of Moscow; also the slaying or the driving out of most of its chief nobles, functionaries, officials and financial or otherwise creative figures, leaving in their place the marching, moneyless proletariat, eager enough perhaps for life but as yet without either the knowledge or temperament or means or privilege to create the situations which they desire. And hence a quiet city—after Moscow one might say almost a dull city. And as contrasted with the life that must have been there when Czarism with all of its authority and arrogance and pomp and wealth was in flower, one can only guess how different. But the feel of an immense difference is over all.

You walk the wide streets, laid down with quite lavish indifference to economy, and view the great buildings, palaces, cathedrals, public offices, squares, the residences of former officials, the residences of former favorites or satellites, the parks, monuments, shrines, museums, former banks, libraries, and think clearly enough—oh, here was

something. Here was authority, show, waste, privilege—all the brilliant and bitter contrasts of a world that gayly, cruelly, indifferently followed the law of the survival of the strongest, and then was as suddenly and strangely swept away into nothingness by those who are sure they have discovered a rule whereby the weakest and not the strongest are to endure.

But what a commentary on what was! For now, as in Moscow and elsewhere in Russia, all the grand halls and chambers of the city are occupied by those who feel themselves the equal of every other—a brother or sister to every other—comrade, “Tovarish,” fellow-citizen. And each with a sharp eye to it that no one shall have a single privilege or power more than another. And so a kind of humdrum of sameness, best as yet, not thrilling, scarcely interesting. For instance, the theaters? How commonplace, and especially after Moscow. And because of the propagandistic nature of most that is done, not mentally stimulating. Worse, the streets and stores not brightly, let alone brilliantly, lighted; the stocks modest; the clothing of the inhabitants little more than adequate. And many of the churches practically in disuse. Not a few of the Government buildings still battered by the revolutionaries are not repaired.

I walked here and there and meditated on what had been; speculated curiously as to what could possibly be where by law and force man is at last restrained in his too great acquisitiveness—is compelled to set aside what he would like and accept what will sustain him, and little more. A curious thing to be compelled to think about in the former home of tyranny as well as privilege. Very curious, indeed.

And yet, many things to look upon and be interested in. The former Winter Palace, restored this year to its original

dark green and white, only now a museum. And from the windows of the same, the former salon of Catherine the Great, now of indifferent memory here, I had a sudden beautiful view of the Neva, its wide principal channel that empties into the Gulf of Finland; and on the other side, the Fortress of Peter and Paul, together with the church of the same name, erected by Peter the Great and still containing the tombs of the Czars and their wives of the past three centuries, its tall, slender gold spire radiant in the light of the by me hitherto unseen sun of Leningrad. On one side of the immense palace, the windows of the great rooms face a square, which, so I was told, was the scene of the greatest battles of the revolution in 1917 and which now is where the official Leningrad Soviet demonstrations are held, as in the Red Square at Moscow.

Adjoining the Winter Palace stands the Hermitage Museum, which to this hour contains, and unaltered—thanks to Great Catherine's devotion to art—a marvelous collection of paintings by foreign artists—Rembrandt, Rubens, Titian, da Vinci, Michelangelo, in fact all the great art names of the Europe of her day, together with many later examples. Also an enormous collection of cameos, some of them done by the Empress herself. Also the crown jewels! Truly, never anywhere else have I seen such—such quantities, such clusters, and such glitter and sheen as in the now electric glare of these once candle-lit rooms greets the eye:—diamonds, pearls, rubies, emeralds, sapphires—oh, an empire of jewels. And so easily, did the Communists of Moscow but order it, sold to buy Russia some very much needed tractors. And without seriously depriving the world of any of its art treasures either. Mere jewels treasured by dubs. Yet remaining here untouched and apparently sacred—a memento of the

grasping taxes and impositions which afflicted the peasantry and workers of a former day.

And again, the great Cathedral of St. Isaac, very rich and magnificent interiorly, though not inspiringly beautiful—one of the show places of religion literally ordered by a former Czar who did not personally care whether religion existed or not. A steel scaffolding inside the lofty dome, erected before the revolution for the purpose of constructing pictures in mosaic work, now stands where it stood when this useless work—as the Bolsheviks saw it—was halted by them, and so spoiling the effect. And now never to be finished. The Bolsheviks do not favor religion. And so presently the scaffolding is to come down. An inner shrine (which one of my guides, being a woman, was not allowed to enter) is flanked by doors of gold weighing three hundred pounds, with four great mosaic work pictures on either side. A curious object under a glass case on the altar took my attention, and I asked: "What is that? A bird's nest?" To my shame, it proved to be a crown of thorns from Jerusalem!

In another part of the city, on the Neva, the ruined Fortress of Peter and Paul runs along the river's edge. Here, as I was informed by a faithful Communist, were confined many famous revolutionists, among them the Decembrists and Veraigner. And inside, as one may see now without hindrance from any one, cell after cell, in long long rows and chill monotony, each a large stone room, with a small, barred window, an iron cot, and an iron table and washbowl in the corner. But with a feel enduring to this hour of many many lives that withered here; old miseries whimpering about each and every room! I heard them. In each heavy iron cell door, a narrow slit with glass in it through which a guard could see into the cell, also a small door on hinges through which food was

passed. Within the prisoner was completely isolated, no sound coming to him through the thick, stone walls. One cell, once used to confine prisoners especially elected for especial punishment, could be made pitch-dark by dropping a solid wooden door over the window. Thereafter silence, loneliness, very possibly hunger!

Naturally, from the standpoint of the present Communistic industrialization program, Leningrad has not the appeal of Moscow. But there are many factories, notably a great rubber factory and a locomotive works employing 11,000 men, to say nothing of many minor enterprises. Also the Leningrad Sovkino, the largest of the Government moving picture studios. But as a commercial city, and since the revolution, the old St. Petersburg has deteriorated, its population since 1917 having fallen from 2,200,000 to but 1,600,000. And there is no evidence as yet that a return of prosperity is in store for it.

But setting that aside, there are many things which continue to interest the stranger, and will—the Leningrad Public Library, for one, which with the American Library of Congress is counted the second largest in the world—4,600,000 books. For after the revolution, the acquisition of large private libraries taken out of the homes of those who fled or were slain doubled the number of volumes. Yet the building itself is very old and decidedly unattractive, so old and unattractive that a new and really grand one is being built to house its wondrous volumes—a work that justly appeals to the Communist mind as essential, for it is for all. At the time that I was there, the entrance to the old administrative offices was so dilapidated that I was sure we were making a mistake, entering the wrong building. However, as we progressed through the many rooms, the library's general appearance improved greatly, began even to assume an ancient dignity and

grandeur. Rare books stood or lay in glass cases. The entire library of Voltaire, purchased by Catherine the Great after his death, was here. Also many original manuscripts of Russian writers—Tolstoi, Dostoievsky, Gogol, Pushkin, Saltykov—a long company. There was also a special exhibit of material from the October Revolution—placards, manifestoes, newspapers, even photographs of actual street fightings in front of the building so clear that a clerk in the library who had been in one of these fights and now saw me studying one particular picture stepped forward and pointing to a crouching figure near a wagon holding a gun said: "There—that's me. I was in the fighting around here." It was a picture of a street fight that took place in front of the library!

And, in this connection, I was also impressed by the very complete sovietization of the library. For in the office of the librarian hung a large portrait of Lenin, instead of, let us say, one of the Czar or Aristotle; also one of Marx. (Imagine him whiskers and all beaming down on you from the office wall of the Librarian of Congress or of the New York Public Library!) And in the reading room, portraits of Stalin, Bukharin, etc. . . . In the library proper was a special department filled with books relating to socialism, communism, and the new Soviet ideology. In short, the kowtowing of the intelligentsia to the workingman and peasant with the gun. And for a very good reason also—FEAR—for their lives as well as their jobs. All the employees, from the director down, extremely civil to every one, especially the proletariat, as I noticed—everybody "Tovarish" or "Comrade" to everybody else. Looking down on the long reading room, full of people sitting at tables or waiting in line at the desk, it was quite evident that the room was not large enough for its present patronage. The Russian Proletariat is reading here

where formerly they were arrested for having an intelligent book in their possession.

Perhaps the most interesting of all the things I saw in or near Leningrad was Tsarkoye Selo (Czar's Village), now known as the Children's Village. This was the former summer palace of the Czars, and the town or village in which it stands is made up of handsome houses where officials of the former Imperial Government lived—among them fifteen Jewish families granted the permanent privilege of living here by one of the Czars because of distinguished military service rendered him by some of their ancestors. Here are churches, army barracks, an extensive park dotted with pavilions, and finally the palace itself, which is not more imposing than many of the other buildings in the town and unquestionably the most tasteless and worst-furnished palace I have ever seen anywhere. In fact, the whole thing had, to me, the air of a cheap and somewhat decayed hotel of some kind.

The commonplace mementos! The wretched art! The useless gewgaws, uniforms, furniture! Really, words fail me!

Nonetheless the palace is now a museum and is kept as the last Czar left it suddenly on Monday, July 30, 1917. They found him writing at his desk, as I understand—a little, meaningless, semi-idiotic man, I fear—and from there led him away to his eventual (he was finally murdered in Ekaterinburg) death. On his desk, at the time that I saw it and standing just as he left it, a loose-leaf calendar pad bearing the date of the day of his departure. My tour of the hundred rooms occupied the better part of two hours, and at the end my conclusion was that it was the worst palace I had ever seen, a joke, a farce artistically—a tremendous effort on the part of an obviously lunatic aristocracy to expend as much wealth

as possible in order to create an atmosphere of grandeur, yet resulting in nothing more than bad taste and ugliness most depressing to contemplate.

For instance, the private suite of Nicholas was especially inharmonious, cluttered up with furniture, bric-à-brac, rugs, very broad Turkish divans painfully out of keeping with the rest of the furniture, and walls literally covered with cheap paintings and worse photographs, as though he had made an especial effort to display all of the wretched presents and mementos he had ever received. Again, his bathroom—a huge, cold, colorless affair, looking like a room in a German beer hall—proved to lack, as did all the other bathrooms in the place, a real bathtub. In its place a great tiled swimming pool in which he could swim if he wished and could. Yet evidently if the poor man wanted a bath, he was compelled to resort to a porcelain bowl and pitcher on a stand. But did he? The only comfortable beds I saw were in the sleeping room of the former Great Catherine, where was a broad, soft-looking bed, and again in the little bedroom of a sailor once assigned as a playmate to the last young heir to the throne, Nicholas III—a cripple. I had never known that until I saw his suite with all the implements devised to aid him to walk.

In one of the grand reception rooms downstairs, one of the Czars (Alexander II, a doting father) had installed a grand slide for his children. This, and a large toy automobile and other playthings, gave the room a queer look.

On the second floor were the children's rooms—perhaps those of the relatives of the Czar as well as his own—one or two of them really artistically decorated and furnished. Also the living rooms of the daughters of the last Czar and the extensive rooms of the last heir. In connection with these were several rooms full of the young heir's play-

things—toy animals, mechanical toys, automobiles, ships, engines; also wardrobe after wardrobe of the poor child's inherited uniforms; also his bedroom, with a very uncomfortable-looking little bed; his bathroom, with only a bowl and pitcher in it and on a table nearby as well as in closets more of the braces and straps which, because of his crippled condition, he had been fitted with and some of which he was no doubt compelled to wear. Poor crippled conclusion of wornout royal stock. But worshiped as royal, nonetheless—a thing to fight and die for by a chained and helpless people—the most powerful, did they but know it, in the world.

As irritating as anything here was the boudoir of the last Czarina, a most bewildering maze of tasteless and pointless furniture and objects. In fact, to me it looked more like the boudoir of a very dull actress than that of a Czarina. The various dressing tables, stands, shelves, and bureaus of all sorts and descriptions were crowded with small ornaments, vases, and photographs. And the walls also, small photographs and paintings of the most inane and trivial character. God! Yet the guide assuring me that it was all just as Her Majesty had left it—as she had lived in it! A large room to one side of her suite contained her enormous wardrobe, a room and collection which would not, I am sure, excite the envy of even a modern shop girl. Hideous long gowns of satin, velvet, and lace, and enormous hats. The Czar's wardrobe of uniforms was even more extensive, and as bad. There must have been hundreds of different uniforms, for all of his different orders. (K. P., Shriners, Elks, etc., etc.)

Positively it was a relief when it was all over and I was driven in a sleigh through the former palace grounds, now a public park. As we dashed here and there, regardless of pedestrian walks or nooks, the snow covering all,

the indignant citizens of this region, not recently accustomed to being thus scattered by plunging sleighs, wandering and unauthorized, paused to hurl curses at us. And one old woman more venomous than the rest suggested that we—my humble and friendly self included—be hung to a tree! Glorious! I thought. How distinguished in these commonplace proletarian days to be thus berated or hung here, say. Apparently I seem as bad as a Czar—hence as good. Glorious! And I sank back suffused with a royal calm. The attack actually gave me a Czar-like feeling.

But what mental lightweights and lunatics that Czaristic crew must have been! To literally throw away—and all for the pleasure of a little tyranny—the vast, magnificent empire that was theirs!



CHAPTER IX

THE TYRANNY OF COMMUNISM

UNQUESTIONABLY, one of the most disagreeable phases of Communist Russia—from an American or English point of view—is the inescapable atmosphere of espionage and mental as well as social regulation which now pervades every part of that great land. The prying. The watching. The necessity to account for one's every move, everywhere, the stranger, I mean. I have various American as well as Russian friends who assert that to date at least the Russians are a people who crave temperamentally some form of tyranny and cannot really be happy without it. As one individual expressed it—"they have a genius for misery."

One cannot very well believe that of any people or part of the human race, but I offer it as a possible sidelight on what follows. For certainly from the time one enters the land until one leaves, there is a never-failing awareness, accompanied by adequate proofs in one form and another, that the present Russian régime fears as well as distrusts most of its visitors and a very large number of its native Russians—really trusts no one.

Yet surrounded as it is and has been by inimical powers,

perhaps that is natural enough. The number of spies and plotters actually seized within the borders of the country is considerable and has been so from the very first. But how hard on the sightseeing stranger, with no evil intentions! The care with which you must guard your passport; the impossibility of doing anything without it! Not a railway station in the country, let alone at the borders, that will sell you a ticket without it; not a hotel receive you. If you want mail and cannot produce your passport or show that some one has it—(your hotel or a Government official)—no mail! And if you innocently bring in a quantity of money—more than you need for your trip, say—and wish to take it out again—(your own money, mind you!)—an investigation! Where did you get it? Why did you bring more than you needed? Why should you want more than you needed? Is this not some bribe or something—Russian money acquired by plotting, say—which you are now trying to take out of the country? And you will have to prove that it is not. Worse, when it comes to your books, papers, letters, at your departure you must turn them all over to some functionary of the Government, who solemnly thumbs through them—(three days or three months for this work as luck may decide)—and decides yes or no whether there is anything there which should cause your further detention.

Not only that, but as I have said elsewhere, there is an air of suspicion, and in places even terror. Armed agents of the G.P.U. (or Communist secret police) are at every station in Russia. An office of the Secret Police—a local branch of the Commissariat of Justice—in every Russian city and town. The native and all too often innocent Russians—bourgeoisie of the older days, let us say—one-time small merchants, manufacturers, White or Czaristic sympathizers, are all too often hauled before it and questioned.

They want to go somewhere, say. A father wants to visit his distant married daughter. A son or daughter their father or mother, or one old friend another. But why? What is the meaning of this? Is this not a plot of some kind? Come to the G.P.U. and be questioned! Let us have your entire past history in detail. And so hours and hours—maybe weeks—before a permit to travel or to receive a traveler is issued. Or jail for even thinking of traveling. And so on, and so on.

Actually, the Soviet press was recently the vehicle for a campaign carried on by representatives of the Commissariat of Justice for the total abolition of defending lawyers in Soviet courts, where now one has but one lawyer, not two or four or six as is so often the case in America. And this springs from the Communist conception of law and orderly judicial procedure which is something different to that which prevails in either America or England. For, according to the Russian or Communist conception, a man brought to trial is guilty unless he can prove himself innocent, the trial merely serving to establish the *degree* of his guilt. This viewpoint takes its rise from an elaborate system of preliminary inquiry, which is presumed to be indulged in by the Government and definitely fixes guilt before ever an offender is seized. And this, they will tell you, is much better and fairer than the assumption that prevails here and in England that a man is innocent until proved guilty. For why, in a situation of doubt, arrest anybody? Why not wait, investigate, be sure? Then act and let the criminal show himself not to be a criminal if he can. Hence all this preliminary espionage, I assume.

In this matter France, which claims to be civilization's vanguard, agrees with Russia. It has the same system. And together these two contradict our Anglo-Saxon method

of jurisprudence. Incidentally, though, and how simply, Russia gets rid of such harpy bands of lawyers, sharpers, technical experts, et cetera, et cetera, as invariably infests and befogs every important trial here. Only recall the Thaw case! For, as it is, Communism allows but one counsel to the defendant. And if he is a poor counsel—so much the worse for the defendant, since the Government is already convinced of his guilt. It sounds dreadful, I know, to deliver nervous and possibly incompetent as well as innocent defendants into the average Russian prosecutor's hand, whoever he may be. But that is the way it is done. Yet if ever I were so unlucky as to be charged with a serious crime in Russia I would prefer, I am sure, to conduct my own defense, rather than entrust my affairs to some unknown and quite obviously lukewarm lawyer afraid, as naturally he would be, of offending the ruling Government there—its private opinion of him and his activities—and so endangering his own neck. For there, if not here, a defendant has the right at any moment to step forward and challenge the evidence or speak in his own behalf. Yet so prejudiced and suspicious is this Communist juristic world of Russia to-day against all who do not agree with it—(and what criminal is assumed to agree with his Government?) and particularly if one's offense or alleged offense chances to be political, or, worse, anti-communistic—that real hope of a fair and impartial trial is slight. I often wondered how many, if any, innocent men were convicted or freed. And now that I am out of Russia, I still wonder.

"For what is justice, if any?" is the question inevitably raised by any great political trial in Russia—the recent "Shakta" conspiracy which was tried in Moscow, for instance. For in Soviet Russia there prevails the harsh Marxian, or perhaps one would better say materialistic, acceptance of the law—which is not the same as justice or

fair play, by any means—as an instrument of government wielded by the ruling class to maintain its own dominance. And in Russia the Communists—representing, as they say, the dictatorship of the workers' and peasants'—rule. And it is they, with all their excited suspicions as to foreign intervention and its handmaiden, internal anti-Communitistic plotting, who wield this instrument. So woe to him who is suspected of designs against the reigning Government or the welfare of Russia in its new form! Woe, and again woe!

I do not know whether by nature the Russian is either suspicious or cruel, but I did hear of executions and imprisonments all over Russia. And the number of anti-Bolsheviks who in the days immediately after the revolution were ruthlessly slain—six thousand, as I heard, in one little city—Feodosia—on the Black Sea; at least fifty thousand in or near Odessa and the Crimea; hundreds here, a thousand there—have been legion. Yet, for reasons, I presume, paralleling those which animated the French people over a hundred years before—hatred of a class that had no consideration for it when it was the underdog.

So to this hour—ten years after all the pains of the royalist overthrow—and when Russia, or rather the Communists, may be said to be fairly well entrenched in their economic and political positions (a great army, a fairly powerful and certainly fairly well-devised and operated economic as well as legal system), the shadow of this same early terror over all. One feels it as one feels a fog or heavy and distressing weather or cold. Who are you? What is it you are about? Why do you venture to do thus and so? And along with it, rumors of secret trials and executions,—the G.P.U. seeking here and there for men and women who may or may not be loyal, who may

or may not be selling secrets to the enemy. Can you imagine that as pleasing or anything less than a depressing atmosphere in which to move and have one's being?

Speaking of this same G.P.U.—it is the eyes and ears of the Communist Party—an organization said to consist of 10,000 picked and trained men, two of whom in uniform and well-armed are to be found at every railway station and dock throughout Russia, by night as well as by day. For it is to railway stations and docks that some of the enemies of Communism must come, when they wish to go here or there and it is well to know where they are going as well as what they are about. In this connection I have been told that these same G.P.U. are perhaps the most efficient and incorruptible of all the Soviet agents. Certainly I found them efficient, though never subservient. Fortunately I could show letters from the Central Government, which always proved most helpful, causing these agents to become more willing, if not anxious, to do anything in their power to further my progress. They are organized, as I understand it, under the Commissariat for Labor and Defense, and in addition to other duties are in charge of customs and the border-police. The Government always claims that counter-revolution, brought about by foreign intervention, is their justification for maintaining this large body of men. And Stalin has said, in answer to criticism: "From an internal point of view, we could do without the G.P.U. But we are a country surrounded by capitalistic governments. The G.P.U. will continue, therefore, to live as a terror to the enemies of the proletariat." And I was repeatedly told that all of the porters in the hotels which house foreigners were G.P.U. men. This I doubt. Too many of them are of insufficient intelligence—most obviously so.

Yet there is espionage. In two hotels, very widely apart,

I was told that there were no pass keys, and that if I did not leave my key, my bed would not be made. And when I did not leave my key, my bed was not made. Yet despite no key and so no made bed, and this assertion concerning the inability to make the bed unless I left my key, my room was entered. Sometimes by a maid, or a laundress, or a plumber, and once, in Baku, by the manager himself, who explained when I encountered him that he had come to look after the heat. But the fiction concerning no pass key, as illustrated by the bed remaining unmade if you did not leave your key, remained.

And everywhere in Russia, and despite much palaver on the part of Communists concerning freedom and spiritual as well as material peace for all, I found, on the part of many, many, a kind of terror of the Communists and what they may do in case you do not talk or even think as they do. Speaking German as I do, and finding here and there a Russian or foreign-born citizen who could speak English or German, I was not infrequently approached (and especially when it became rumored that I was an outlander of some influence) by clerks or professional men or traders, or even small office holders, who whispered that all was not as well with Russia as the Communists would have the world believe. Prices of everything were outrageously high, and salaries could not compare with what things cost. And there was never enough of anything, neither food nor clothing nor entertainment, nor what you would. The Communists said there was, but why shouldn't they? They had the good jobs, provided themselves with cars to ride around in, and first-class compartments in trains and hotels wherever they went. And they all wore good clothes. Had I noticed that? (I had.) That's why they insisted that everything was all right. But watch the common man—the man out of a job or working at some little trade not

connected with the big industries which the Government was fostering—or the man who was a little over forty. Was he happy, or well-dressed, or well paid? Yes, he was—not! The Government did not care much about him, because he was not young enough to be taught to believe all that they wanted him to be taught and to believe. And so they would do nothing for him.

More—many whispered that there was misery enough! The farmers were not getting enough for what they raised to buy them boots or overcoats. Hadn't I noticed that? But if one said a word, if one didn't sing just their song—Kish!—(and here one speaker drew his index finger across his throat, indicating an economic if not actually a physical decapitation). And another man—a barber in Stalin—put his finger to his lips as a man entered and afterwards whispered that he was a G.P.U., not in uniform but always spying about the city. And still another, a musician playing in a restaurant in Rostov, a seaport on the Don River, insisted that the police and the Communists were too officious and superior, even brutal at times. "They talk about how terrible things were under the Czar, but I lived under the Czar," he said, "and the soldiers and officials weren't any worse than these people. Then you couldn't say a word against the Czar; now you can't say a word against these fellows!"

And my personal conclusion, after almost three months of observation, was that this was true. You must believe, or pretend to believe, that collectivism is right, individualism wrong; that holding or wishing for private property is an evil and the curse of the rest of the world; that it is not right to want anything that all cannot have; that upon the worker more than the intellectual rests the burden of maintaining the world. Also that to work together, "one for all and all for one," is the only way to collective or

State happiness; that to want special things for yourself—even rare or different articles of adornment—is wrong. And that mass wants (for likeness rather than difference) should control. That the machine is the worker's as well as Russia's friend. That the shorter working day, with the consequent longer period for recreation or study, is for the great good of all. That there must not and shall not be any classes; and that the establishment of this fact, either by war or peace, falls to the lot of Russia because of its present intellectual or humanitarian leadership in the world.

Oh, very well! Let it be so, if you will! Only I wish to remark here that the phrase: "Dictatorship of the Proletariat," in so far as Russia is concerned, is a misnomer. There is a dictatorship of the Communist Party in the interests of the Proletariat. This Party (fifty per cent of whom are workers and peasants and fifty per cent public officials, about half of whom were formerly proletarian) consists of no more than (in 1927) 1,200,000 members who rule the rest of Russia. They insist that it is the workers who rule them, but that is a pleasant theory only. The Government, directed by the Communist Party, employs labor just as might a capitalist trust. It seeks not only efficiency but mental loyalty and conformity, and unless it gets it there is trouble. Let any one show disloyalty in any way, and he loses his job. What befell Trotzky, Radek, Rakovsky, and others once they failed to agree with the present powers of the Communist Central Committee? They were exiled, and that quite swiftly. And at the very time that this process of excommunication and silencing was under way I was in Russia—in Moscow—and seeking appointments with not only Radek and Rakovsky, but Trotzky also. Only, in the case of Trotzky, I was told that it was quite impossible, that the mere seeking of such an interview by me would do harm not only to myself but to Trotzky.

Already he was being watched and anything he had to say intercepted and censored or destroyed. So anything that I might possibly obtain from him would also be examined and censored.

In the case of Radek whom I did see and talked with, the situation was somewhat different. At that time both he and Rakovsky still occupied quarters in the Kremlin (the official or state residence of leading executive Communists) and were assumed to be in Party favor. At the same time, they really were not, although the public did not know that, and it was impossible for me to see them. They would telephone or leave word for me to call on them, but when I did so I was informed at the outer gate of the Kremlin that they were not in. Yet when I would return to my hotel and call up, there they were, and at my invitation would come to see me. And at last it was Radek who indicated (truly diplomatically, of course) that all was not well, but that soon he would have rooms outside where his friends could call. But before that could happen, they were already tried by some secret process and ordered to the Mongolian frontier, where, for all the world knows, or at the time this book goes to press, they still are.

Yet if that were all. But it is not. Russia is colored with such things—whispers, suspicions. The recent “Shakta” trial of technicians in Russia’s principal mining center—the Donetz Basin—charged with counter-revolution in the form of sabotage (trying to shorten the coal supply in order to injure the present régime) is a case in point. Months and months and months must have gone into the labor of verifying the primary rumors, collecting the deadly data, before they were seized and tried. Yet finally it broke, as unexpected in so far as the public or the world was concerned as a flash of lightning, or a peal of thunder. Foreign as well as Russian technicians were seized. A

world of data had been gathered and laid before the Commissariat of Justice. The crime of counter-revolution, for which the punishment is death, was charged. In vain, Germany—some of whose technicians appeared to be groundlessly involved—protested and even threatened to break off relations. The press of France, Germany, England, Poland and where not else charged that the thing was a mere gesture on the part of the Central Powers in Moscow—an attempt to cover up inefficiency and failure in their own attempts to operate an impossible system of government. Still the trial proceeded; the accused were convicted and eight of them executed and without, as I have indicated, the benefit of much legal advice.

While in Russia and in this very connection I heard of two most interesting cases, both disturbing to an outlander because of the mystery and secrecy involved. One related to three men, all not only known to but friends of one of the most important of the international newspaper correspondents there. These men were Russians but in differing walks of life. One was connected with the importing and exporting division of the Government. The second was a department chief in one of the Government-owned stores in Moscow. The third was a unit in the telegraph service of the Government. All were Communists in good standing, all fairly able, but not in any way distinguished men, merely useful. Quite regularly, as I was told, they were to be seen about Moscow at small receptions and parties given here and there. My newspaper friend knew all three and had played cards with them. One of them liked very much to dance, another to play tennis. They were, as he described them to me, socially agreeable and entertaining, but not such men as he would have connected with conspiracy, or even Government policy in any form.

And yet after a time they disappeared completely. But

no one of them being in any way important to him, he merely recorded the fact mentally that he had not seen any of them for some time, but did not trouble to inquire. They were small officials and probably busy. Yet one day, chancing to be in one of the court buildings connected with the Commissariat of Justice and looking into one of the court rooms where a case was being tried, he observed three men sitting on the bench usually devoted to defendants on trial. And all pale and disheveled—men who apparently had been confined for some time. Becoming curious as to the nature of the case, he inquired of one of the attendants and learned the names as well as the nature of the charge—conspiracy. But even so, he did not connect the names as he heard them pronounced with the men he had known. Yet drawing nearer and taking a seat and studying them, it finally came to him that there was something familiar about all three. Where had he seen them before? What was it they had been doing? With what had they been connected? And then suddenly one of the men looking at him smiled and bowed. And then another, and finally the third. And so they came back to him clearly, but now primarily as a shock! Conspirators! These men! And on trial for their lives! Yet no word in any of the papers—not a word. He could scarcely believe it, he said, and listened with enormous curiosity to a part of the evidence which concerned information sold to a foreign ambassador, or his office, and the same seemingly fairly established. At least there was a scathing attack by the Government prosecutor in charge of the case, a mild defense on the part of the defendants' lawyer. They had been, he claimed, unwitting tools in the hands of shrewder men. Nevertheless, after a few days—with himself in attendance as much as possible—they were convicted and sentenced to die.

"But were they guilty?" I asked. "I do not know," he replied. "I was in no position to look into the matter. It was a government case about which there was no stir of any kind. I could not very well begin an inquiry of my own without attracting considerable attention to myself and causing the Commissariat of Justice to look upon me as perhaps unduly officious or unfriendly. At least I felt that way about it at the time."

"But what about justice in such a case? You mean to say that there is no way in which the general public is to be made aware of such a charge and its opinion consulted?"

"Well, you see, that is not the way the law is here. The Government does not arrest or charge, or at least it says it does not, until it has sifted all the evidence and is convinced of guilt. So for me to come up afterwards with inquiries, an investigation, and especially when I represent a group of foreign papers not friendly to Russia,—well—I decided to keep out of it. . . ."

"But what about the Russian papers?"

"The Russian papers, my friend, publish what they are advised to publish—what is in the interests of the ruling powers. This is a Communist Dictatorship."

"And so people can be taken up like that—just disappear—and nothing more is heard?"

"Well, these men were. More, the verdict was against them and they were shot, so I heard, but exactly when or where I do not know. I thought it best not to inquire too closely. After all, I hold a position which, as things are here, is fairly a diplomatic one. I cannot become too critical. I or my papers might be informed that I was not wanted here. But the sight of those men after that long silence and under such changed conditions—I tell you it gives me a chill even now. And to this hour I do not know whether they were guilty or not. But I am fairly

well convinced that the Commissariat of Justice believed them guilty or it would not have brought them to trial."

The other one concerned a high Russian technician in charge of a great steel plant in the Donetz Basin. A Russian girl or woman employed by him, or coming to him in connection with some work, was attacked by him. At first she said nothing, shame inducing silence. Later she told her story to a sister Communist, who sympathizing with her and holding the honor of Communism as well as of all Communists smirched thereby, insisted that duty compelled her to lay the matter before the Communist Central or Executive Committee. But secretly at the girl's request. And at once this was done. Then, in a fury, the Central Committee summoned, secretly, first the injured girl, to whose story they listened; later the accused official. As I heard, in this first conference he was all but physically attacked by his party fellows. Later—but secretly—the whole business was given over to the Commissariat of Justice, which turned its engine, the G.P.U., upon the work of sifting the evidence.

At last the man—after the girl was bothered with inquiries and investigations as to her character, motives, etc.—was not only cast down from his high position but sentenced to four years in a Russian penitentiary, wherein to this hour he lies. But all done secretly. No comment in any Russian paper. No broadcasting the information to any of his friends. Only the Central Committee and some officials of the Commissariat of Justice and the G.P.U. know where he is. To get the full significance of all this, as well as the difference in procedure, set this over against a similar incident in America.

But perhaps I have said enough to indicate what I mean. There is a kind of terror that lies in secret methods of any kind which chills the heart of man. He does not

know, and so he fears. I do. They may be fair or just, but there is something about secrecy—this dictatorial type of shadowing and its unpublished conclusions or executions—which terrorizes all men. My eminent and experienced journalist friend, non-Russian though he was, was so overawed or frightened. And I have a Russian friend here in America now—an eminent Russian scientist, exiled for his views—who insists that Communists reign largely because of terroristic methods and the assistance of those who fear that its overthrow would only mean something worse for them individually. He also insists that in no other country has Communism its roots so lightly planted. The peasants are, according to him, against it, because by nature they are individualistic and so self-centered,—the workers, who form but a small proportion of the population, are apart from personal profit more or less indifferent. They get along best of any in Russia so they make no complaint. I am merely quoting a critic, you see. Yet the instinct for self-preservation, assisted as it is by a highly developed patriotism, is not only accepting Communism but pushing the country on to work under it, to create, to organize, and all this in spite of rather than because of the Communists' political power.

And as if to bear out his theory, and as I have indicated above, I did find various dissenting voices all over Russia.

On the other hand, and over against that, I think of the long lines of marchers entering the Red Square on that gray, snowy last November day, the particular day that inaugurated the celebration of the Tenth Anniversary of the Red Revolution. Never before had I expected to see nor had I seen so strange a thing. The marching of thousands upon thousands—say fifty or a hundred or two hundred thousand or more—Asiatics of all casts of countenance from Chinese to European and singing hymns of

brotherhood and saluting reverently as they passed the mausoleum of the master of them all—Lenin. No priests, no religious banners or ikons hitherto so common in Russia, but instead merely symbols of a new and vital human determination to make life more bearable for all. All day and far into the night they marched. The Red Army, ten years ago, a half-starved, half-clothed mob; that day a well-clothed, well-manned host officered by men elected from its ranks, and schooled in politics and war, their bearing and deportment military in the extreme, Kurds from Kurdistan; Don Cossacks in long, flying coats, boots, spurs, and fur caps, and riding small but apparently swift and strong horses. Siberian Rifles; Caucasus Mountain Artillery, with light mountain wagons fitted with small cannon or machine guns. Then the frontier guards and troops of revolutionists from far Georgia, with gray beards and heavy fur hats and dashing capes with vivid blue linings and riding smart, black horses. Then the workers' guards—trades unionists—machinists, wood turners, glass makers, shoe machine men, furniture men, stone cutters—a hundred lines and all armed. And after them the rank and file of workers grouped by factory or institution, thousands and thousands of men and women and boys and girls, some in white, some in blue, some wearing white caps, some red, and, after the Russian temperament, all rather vivid. And floats to demonstrate what Russia is now achieving commercially—reapers, binders, tractors, hay balers, engines, cars, steel bars, commercial wares of all kinds—and the whole interspersed with banners, telling the world, I suppose, that Soviet Russia will never again endure capitalist tyranny, or words to that effect.

They were all marching to show the world how great was their faith in Red Russia and its determination to make a new day, a better day for all. And it is possible, if not

entirely probable at this writing, and if only human nature can rise to the opportunity, that here at last is a genuine betterment for the race. Yet again, mayhap not—the program being possibly too beautiful to succeed, an ideal of existence to which frail and selfish humanity can never rise. I wonder.



CHAPTER X

THE PRESENT-DAY RUSSIAN PEASANT PROBLEM

THE peasant population of Russia is a little over one hundred and twenty millions. And as I hear mostly illiterate. For until 1917 there was no real educational or economic program in connection with them. They were suffered to remain ignorant, the fat-headed Czaristic Government (and what a pack of numbskulls must have functioned as such!) being idiotically determined to herd them into the Greek church and the royalist faith. And at that day and date! Income of any kind, beyond a bare living, was taken in taxes. There were no roads and no bridges. And none intended. And no books, no libraries, and few schools, because the magnificent leeches in charge were determined to keep all this vast company of individuals in ignorance. They did not wish them to meet—hence no roads—nor to have anything intellectual to discuss if they did meet. Hence no books, magazines, or newspapers. (And yet the romantic Tolstoi wanted to unload on them not an education but a new kind of religion!)

Positively when I think of them now, I am convinced that never anywhere have I seen more wretched, if by no

means at present economically oppressed, people! Those dreary, isolated, snow-buried towns. No roads worthy of the name. The meager equipment of the homes, all so disturbingly small, because the smaller the less heat required. And the furniture! Our American farmhouses of 1828 in Arkansas, Texas, Wyoming, were all better furnished. Handmade beds, tables, and chairs of the crudest kind; utensils of the most primitive sort for cooking and eating. A brick stove giving perhaps just enough heat. And the wretched clothes, wretched farming implements—a none too good cow or horse—and a sleigh that an American farmer would look upon as the mere skeleton of one. And then outside, endless wastes of snow. No water system, no lights. Perhaps a well or a stream to which all go for water. And fall on the ice or snow and spill the water, and so wearily march back to do it all over again!

And over all—in every house, barn, soviet, church, school—that sickly and to me half-stifling Asiatic odor. (I was told it was not due to filth or unwashed bodies, or cockroaches or bed bugs, but rather to a low-grade tobacco—Mahorka—smoked by the men and some of the old women, also to a sediment of kerosene used in their scrubbing water. Well, maybe. But an odor there is.) And no toilet arrangements other than those furnished by the wide open spaces. And horse and chicken and cow and pig manure littering the ground and the immediate vicinity, sometimes the very living room, of the house itself. In summer, I am told, one must add flies, mosquitoes and other insects.

Yet to-day, at least, a central soviet, where an agent or two of the Communist Party functions. And a post office with (maybe) a telephone. And a school now for all, young and old, as well as the antiquated Greek church and the public banya (bath) to which all are rumored to re-

pair at least once a week—I hope so. And here and there a number of what in America would be known as agricultural stations, with all the latest information and machinery in regard to farming and stock raising open to all who can learn.

But just the same, it is one thing to take modern information to an age-old peasantry or tribal group, and another to make it accept it. In the Caucasus, for instance, and the eastern and southeastern portions of Siberia, the Soviet Government is dealing with little more than savages who have everything to learn this side of a nomadic existence. Forty to sixty and seventy per cent illiterate; no least sense of modern communal life; Islamism, or what you will, still dominating their minds. And, unless I am maliciously informed, the tribesman or peasant desires as yet nothing so much as to be let alone, to be allowed to go along in the way which hitherto he has known. And even the problem of interesting him has as yet barely been touched, his indifference to what the idealists at Moscow have to offer being one of their severest trials. So serious is this problem, so hopeless the understanding of the majority, that the Government is now seeking to unite these weaker individuals into groups, working under instructors from the local soviet, in the hope that thus their general inefficiency will be offset by communal direction plus the inauguration of modern machinery and methods.

But this, again, is complicated by the fact that to the few peasants who, from reasons of either selfishness or ability, would proceed to apply these new methods in an aggressive fashion, the Soviet Government, according to the Communist plan, is now compelled to say: "Restrain yourselves!" For under Communism no man is entitled to more than a moderate income, however hard he toils or whatever ability he may have. Allotted a limit of fifteen

acres at the most for himself and family, he must content himself with the yield of that or see it taken away in the form of taxes. Not only that, but he may not even employ a "hand" beyond a son or daughter, because that turns him into a capitalist or bloodsucker and he at once—to weaken his power in the State—loses his right to vote.

Naturally, many—those of an individualistic turn—and I heard there were millions of them—resent this. And while they do not sigh for the old Czaristic days by any means, since in them they were thoroughly squeezed and repressed, still they do not exactly favor these idealists of Moscow either. If they had their way, they would like to see the present form of government changed so as to permit the shrewd and the strong to go ahead and get the best of the weak. At the same time, they would not like to see others still stronger than themselves return and get the best of them. So, alas, they are in somewhat of a quandary, and their way out of it at present is to cheat the Government and their humbler and less talented neighbors as much as possible. And, of course, as is always the case where people think shrewdly enough along such lines, there are ways of doing so. For the ordinary peasant can be very, very dumb—so dumb, in short, that in the eyes of his shrewder brother it seems a pity not to do something to him. (The baby and the candy, as it were!) At the same time—and even among the pure, honest Communists, there are some who wear the uniform but do not practice what they are supposed to practice. Hence trickery—money loaned to the poorer peasants by the shrewder ones at excessive rates of interest—and collected, yet always secretly of course! Land worked presumably by a peasant for himself but in reality to pay the interest on money which he has been inveigled into borrowing. "Kulaks" (rich peasants, that is—and even to-day there are many

who are said to be so)—farming by one slick device and another more land than is truly theirs to farm. Ah, those nasty, nasty Kulaks! And how thoroughly they are hated by the poorer peasants—and feared by the wise Communists, among them no less a person than Leon Trotzky, who insisted all along that the form of their labor (the peasants' labor, that is) tends to individualize them, more than his does the worker, and that in consequence they will always need to be watched and held in check. Well, let that be as it will for the present.

It is commonly asserted now in Russia that the land belongs to the Government but is as accurately as possible divided among all of the peasants and that in practice it is kept pretty well divided in very small lots—so much to each peasant—so that no matter how shrewd a Kulak may be he cannot get such a large area into his power, or under his direction or pocket the proceeds either, without connivance on the part of some one, and that is probably true. Only many Communists in Russia seek to give the impression that before the revolution no peasant had any land of his own, or so very little that it meant nothing, whereas the truth is that three-fourths of the land was held in some form by tenants—very, very often in fee simple; at other times as tenant farmers under landlords whom they frequently worsted by their shrewdness. After the revolution, of course, every member of a family was granted the right to a piece of land. The peasant with a family of five receives a piece of land for each member of his family. (This tenancy does not extend to the natural resources—oils, minerals—which may be on the land.) And if he cannot work the land, he can rent it. But if he rents it for more than three years, the Government seizes it; and in the meantime all taxes in connection with it are based on the size of the family. If a large family, then a larger tax.

Also it is considered that the larger the family, the richer the peasant. To offset this, the poorer peasant is given an opportunity to coöperate with other peasants of his own type in farming a united area and so maintain his status after a fashion. To this end, the Coöperatives, influenced by the Moscow Government, give credit to the poor peasant or his coöperative group in order that they may buy equipment.

But to return to the Kulak, or rich peasant of whom I have just spoken. Before the revolution, as I understand it, he was practically the ruler of the village. The poor and middle peasants usually needed money in the winter and had to work for him in order to live, and so he came into power. But now although his income is sometimes much higher than the other peasants', he is not only heavily taxed but if he hires labor he is disfranchised. His land, due to devices of his own, may equal a thousand acres, but the difference in his standard of living, due to taxes, of course, is not so great—usually only a more comfortable home and somewhat better food and clothing. For, as I understand it, there are, and can be under the present form of government, only three forms of power which his wealth may take—machinery, labor, and speculation. The Government encourages the first, because this lessens the need for hiring labor and increases the general production and standard of agriculture, and machines are not taxed; the second—the employment of one peasant by another—is discouraged; the third is an evil and fought as such. In other words, "there is a law."

But true or false as this may be, the general material and mental level of the peasant throughout Russia is said to be improving, and from what I personally saw I believe this to be true. As yet he is not well clothed—in many cases most miserably so. And his little wooden cabin due to the

necessity of conserving heat is pathetically small. On the other hand, and positively, he has a government that is trying to do something for him, at no turn seeking to rob him, however much he may seek to injure it. It has opened and is still opening and improving as rapidly as possible agricultural schools and colleges and farms in which he may—if only he has the intelligence to take advantage of them—hear and see nearly everything of advantage in connection with modern farming. And not only that, but with the least responsiveness to the Government's efforts, he can and does find himself in possession of an equipment which should and does, where there are any brains at all, lighten his labors and add to his material prosperity.

But do you imagine that all are ready to learn? Or that they do not listen foolishly and finally malevolently to all the disruptive whisperings which can and do spring from a number of sources—the individualist who despises Communism, the religionist who in the enlightening of his former dumb tool and slave sees his own fat patrimony evanishing. It is so easy to wish to do something for humanity—much harder to work out a process by which its state can be improved. But hardest of all, as all intelligent men the world over know, to make it see the easiest and broadest road to its own improvement and comfort. But even so—and as I say—there is a general improvement, in which the peasant, whatever the state of his mental darkness, cannot help but share. For where formerly he was but thinly connected with all of the things which to-day—in the west, at least—we look upon as aids to not only life and health and strength but ease and comfort, if not luxury, at this hour he is more or less directly confronted by them and cannot very well escape them, however he may try—the good road, free rural mail de-

livery, the telegraph, telephone, and radio; the daily newspaper and an education which will permit him to read, write, cipher and so enter on various modern fields of thought. Also at his door to-day is national sanitation, national agricultural information; all the latest machinery, from the tractor up or down; a general extension and improvement of the national railroads; better and more sanitary clothing, food, housing—in short, everything and anything which might possibly prove to his advantage, help him fight off ignorance, disease, poverty, and the feeling that he is more oppressed than his fellow-man.

Now what other country to-day is doing more or as much, for the ignorant peasant or farming class within its borders?

In short to-day, in Russia, even the remotest and smallest nationalities whose culture is very low are being reached through trade union organizations, coöperatives, radio. In Moscow, by one of the Director-Generals of Agriculture, I was told of a wild people of the Kasakstan Republic, nomads, really, who travel from place to place with their herds, who, nonetheless, hearing of the new culture and the new farming life, with machinery, finally sent a delegation of fifteen to Moscow to ask for land and tractors in order that they might settle down and farm! Not horses, but *tractors*, mind, were what they wanted! They had to talk through an interpreter, because they didn't even speak Russian, but they got the land and tractors.

Again, Harold Ware, Director of a Government farm in the Ukraine, told me about the work of an American group of which he was one, in introducing American machinery and methods into Russian agriculture. He and some other American enthusiasts entered Russia some few years since and secured from the Russian Government a tract of about 7,000 acres in the Caucasus, onto which they introduced the

very latest American farming machinery—tractors, combination reapers and threshers, 22-blade plows, and the like. With these and a permit to work laborers twelve hours at a stretch instead of six, with the next day off, they managed to use their machinery to the limit, and so opened the eyes of the natives, and even the Russian Government to agricultural possibilities in that direction, that presently representatives of other Russian agricultural stations began to come from long distances to see what was doing. And taking up the new methods for themselves the while, in adjoining fields, less enlightened or forward-looking peasants were still plowing with single-bladed plows, hauled either by oxen or camels—the traditional beasts of burden of a thousand years.

Ware also told me of a peasant who one day broke his small scythe and came over to this particular concession to borrow one. They had none to lend him and were about to turn him away, when one of the men suggested that since they had a welding plant they might fix his broken scythe for him. Accordingly, they took and joined it quite as good as new. But when they returned it to the peasant, he would not believe it was his. How could a broken scythe be made whole? He seemed to suspect a miracle. But since the handle was the same he finally took it. And then, amazed, hurried to spread the news of a wonder. And soon thereafter a long procession of peasants with broken tools, most of which could be fixed, and which in order to establish cultural relations with them they did fix. The result was that finally almost the entire district in which the great farm lay was technically enlightened and improved.

In this connection, I would like to say that I was especially interested in Ware's account of the locust plagues which were formerly so devastating in Russia. So late as

two years ago the locusts swept down from the sandy lowlands in great armies several miles wide and long, and not only laid waste the fields but laid their eggs which hatched out last summer. Yet warned of the impending plague, news of which was telegraphed by Communists to the local Government center, the latter quickly organized a chemical warfare which proved entirely successful. This was nothing more than an order which compelled every peasant in the afflicted area to serve three days in the work of spraying the fields at three roubles per day, or, in case he refused so to do, pay a fine of the same amount. The result was that nearly all served. And in three days the necessary spray being also provided the whole area was completely covered and the hatching locusts and their eggs killed.

In another district twenty or thirty miles wide and forty miles long, an enormous cloud of locusts appeared, so huge as to darken the sun. They were flying somewhere to lay their eggs but eating as they went. An appeal being at once sent to the Central Soviet, this, in turn, appealed to the Agricultural Bureau at Moscow for advice. The latter's reply was aeroplanes, with destructive gases. These descended on the cloud from various directions, and in no time at all—an afternoon, I believe—sprayed and so destroyed them!

In this connection again, I once asked about the proverbial laziness and slowness of the Russian peasant. Would not this interfere with the proper industrialization of Russia? Mr. Ware and others whom I later interviewed seemed to think not. In the first place, said Ware, he was sure that their slowness and laziness was due, in most part, to undernourishment and an insufficiently varied diet, consisting mainly of soup, black bread and potatoes, never meat. And because of this lack of meat, they were weak

and had to rest a great deal. In the case of his particular concession, and to overcome this troublesome lethargy which seemed to affect all of his workers, he gave orders to put meat in all soups twice a day. The result was a highly increased working capacity, less sleeping or lying about, and much more vivacity. From this and the necessity for all machines to be operated at a given speed, regardless of whether the worker wished it or not, he deduced that the Russian's present leisurely temperament might, and no doubt would, be affected and finally overcome!

But all this has as yet not solved Russia's agricultural problem. Russia does not now (and as things at the present moment appear, will not for years be able to) meet its own agricultural needs, let alone gather through agricultural taxes those funds with which it hopes to pay its way and build the new Communistic heaven. Stirred by the truth of this which came to me in many ways, I finally offered one plan which looks toward a solution of the problem. This was first: That the Government, instead of trying to organize so many minor local groups of mostly incompetent peasants into farming units, divide or district instead all of the agricultural land of Russia into such workable units as would best represent each unit's or district's agricultural possibilities. Next, in turn assign to each such unit or district a trust or farming commissar, whose business it should be to run or farm the district about as the Standard Oil Company would run or regulate an oil region. In short, it would be the business of such a Commissar and his aides to train and employ all such agricultural help as was needed; to organize the farming peasants into unions, pay them union wages, guarantee them the benefits now guaranteed to labor in every other field in Russia, and at the same time introduce into the work all the latest machinery; third, in winter, instead of allowing them to sit about in

their huts in silence and brood, it would be the business of such a commissar, working with the other officials of the Government, to allocate and transport to other industries where their services might be valuable in the winter time, as many of such summer farmworkers as possible. Also in the summertime, as I pointed out, various stable industries which need not be run the entire year could be shut down and the farm hands or union peasants returned to the fields. Thus, and thus only, as it seemed to me, could this great agricultural problem be solved. Yet I had no taker. But the suggestion is still here.

And now a word as to the much-talked-of vodka-drinking by the Russian peasant. Granting that it has had a decidedly injurious effect on the progress of the peasant in times past and that the present Government deplored and denounced and even excommunicated vodka, still it was the present Government that reestablished it, the only change being that now it contains forty as against fifty, sixty and seventy per cent alcohol of pre-revolutionary days. But in one of the addresses made by Stalin before ever I arrived in Russia, he said: "We had to decide whether to enslave ourselves to the capitalists by giving them our factories and receiving in return the means necessary to turn around, or to make a vodka monopoly in order to get the necessary working capital for the revival of our industries by our own means. Vodka is an evil, but to enslave ourselves to the capitalists is a worse evil."

Hence vodka, he might have added. And, incidentally, the Government states that its income from vodka is a half-billion roubles, a sum which covers the cost of the army and navy.

In line with the efforts of the Government to make life easier for every one, including the peasant, there are now 380 Peasant Guest Houses scattered over Russia, and op-

erated by the Government for the general comfort and education of the peasant who as often as not and without cost to him is invited by the Government to visit the city and so learn of the many things to be seen there and that are calculated to make happier men and so better citizens. In different parts of that great country, I saw six of these Guest Houses, most amazing contrivances really, for the enlightenment of the peasant! Before the revolution a peasant coming to the city was usually a victim of all sorts of exploitation and plundering. He got drunk, lost his money, etc., etc. Now, thanks to these Guest Houses, he may stay in them. The average length of his permitted stay, free of charge, is ten days. But if his business keeps him longer and he has no or very little money, he may stay longer. And as a guest of the Government and a student of modern affairs—although he by no means always realizes he is such—he is expected on his arrival to take a bath in the banya, or steam bath and then, later, learn a few things. (If only he could be persuaded to do the same daily!) For instance, after his bath his first enlightenment or education comes in the form of various lessons in cleanliness and order. For instance, there are three to six beds in a room and if he is not a Government guest his bed costs him 25 kopecks a day, breakfast 25 kopecks and dinner 30 kopecks. But even though he is not invited and if he is very poor, he may either stay free of charge or at reduced rates. All the rooms are large, light and clean; the beds have clean linen and blankets and look comfortable. No poor peasant up to this day ever saw anything as good. The only drawback as the peasant sees it is that there is too much red tape—and worse, cleanliness connected with it all. He may not get in bed with his boots on. Or be drunk when he does so. At one o'clock at night all guests must

be in bed and lights out. Tough, eh? Yet—in the hotel by day are free clinics with doctors in attendance; also Government lawyers offering him free legal service; also exhibits in charge of agronomes; lectures, moving pictures and plays in the large auditorium; also excursions to museums, etc., etc. These, of course, seem a little heavy at times and fall on dull ears or eyes but not always. Some, especially the women, I was told, like them. (My poor benighted sex!) There is also, of course, a Lenin Corner or reading room, with many posters propagandizing the peasant in the matter and meaning of his government, its organization, the import of his union of peasant and workers, the Communist Party; religion, or rather anti-religion, etc., etc.

In Moscow, where I first saw the Central Guest House, it proved to be a five-story brick building, half a block long, and located in the very center of the city. It accommodated 400 peasants. Another, the Moscow Gubernia House, was formerly the beautiful Hermitage Hotel but is now used for the enlightenment of the peasants of the Moscow Gubernia, or state, which is about the size of the State of Ohio and in the same way. At the door of that hotel one day I saw a remarkable group of Usbeckistanese as well as another of Turkomans arriving. They were from beyond the Caucasus Mountains and wore enormous and shaggy fur hats and bright-colored robes tied at the waist with sashes. At the time I arrived they were busily piling their baggage, which consisted of numerous bags made of Turkish rugs and rolls of blankets, not on the sidewalk before but in the very entrance of the building, thus blocking all ingress and egress, and of course talking all the while in a strange tongue. Naturally, after a little time there was some argument with other peasants more informed than themselves, as to whether they were to enter

or move on. The matter was finally solved by one of the officials of the Guest House, who came and explained that the entrance was for all—themselves as well as others. Thus in the end, they melted into the strange and no doubt to them ominous interior!

* * *

There are many who think too much is being done for the peasant. Trotzky, for one, who sees him as an individualist, selfish, greedy, wanting only his bit of land, that more should be done to help the poor peasant at the expense of the Kulak. Stalin, on the other hand, believes that the peasant is the soul of Russia and the source of its vitality and that much should be done for him first and the Kulak given rein to increase production. The recent split between the two men and Trotzky's defeat and exile was, in part at least, based on this difference in theory.



CHAPTER XI

THE RUSSIAN LABORER—HIS FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIES

TECHNICAL and detailed investigations of the condition of the Russian factory worker have been made and published by committees of unionized workers from England, America, Sweden, Germany and, I believe, Japan. And these conclusions, in so far as I have been able to gather, have pictured the Russian union worker as about as well off—not more so—than his unionized fellows in the United States and Canada—better than in most of the other countries mentioned.

And that may be true. In personal conversations with laborers in different parts of Russia—Leningrad, Moscow, Kharkov, Kiev, Odessa, Rostov, Nijni-Novgorod, the Donetz Basin and other regions—(laborers some of whom, by the way, spoke English and quite a few of whom had lived and worked in America)—I gathered that they considered themselves as well off in Russia as in America—but not more so. And not less so. And the reasons for this as they outlined the same to me were as follows:

In America they made more money, but they spent more to live, so that the higher wages were canceled by the

higher cost of living. On the other hand, life in America, as yet at least, was more pleasing or interesting—they found more diverting and amusing things to do. Russia though, and be it remembered, was their native land, and being Russian-born they were more at home there. Besides, in Russia, at this time, decidedly the workingman was more secure and generally better treated. He had as short, or where difficult or dangerous work was concerned, shorter hours, and his state in sickness, old age, accident, and in other ways, was better safeguarded, so that all things considered, and especially if he were no longer young, his working life in Russia was on a sounder basis. On the other hand, America was a very interesting country, lots to see, much fun to be had, and if a man were still young and ambitious, certainly he could do as well there as anywhere. And assuming that he was not wholeheartedly a Communist and preferred a few private possessions, or wanted to get control of something for himself, well, America was much better, of course. It depended, really, on how much of a Communist you were, whether you would prefer to be in or out of Russia—yet I heard no one say that if he were not in Russia he would prefer to be in any country other than America.

On the other hand, among nearly all the workers, young and old, who had never been out of Russia, and some of whom—the old—had worked in factories or mines or what not existing in the days of the Czar, I found few who had a complaint to register. Most of the old as well as the young were enthusiastic in their approval of the conditions now surrounding them. Oh, indeed, everything was better—wages, working conditions in the factories, the type of home or apartments now open to them and in which now, thanks to the new Government, they were able to live; the nurseries for their babies, the hospitals and sanitariums for

their various illnesses or indispositions; their union pleasure resorts, educational institutions, and facilities, their libraries, clubs, theaters, moving pictures, radios, and above all, their grand future as a sovietized and communized country—the very nature and conditions of which assured them, as time went on, a better and easier working life.

I wondered—but nonetheless I was fascinated by the very genuine evidence that in so far as the unionized and skilled factory labor of Russia was concerned, there was little complaint. And I cannot very well imagine how, under conditions as they are now, there can very well be much. Certainly if factory, mine and other forms of day and unionized labor ever enjoyed comfortable and socially advantageous conditions, these same are the factory, mine and other forms of labor now operating in Russia. They practically make their own social as well as working conditions. To be sure—and as yet—they form but a very small percentage of the total population of the country—some eight millions as opposed to a national and largely agrarian population of some one hundred and forty millions, most of whom are not nearly so well looked after yet. But at any rate, the laborer is at last, and in some one place on this earth at least, being properly taken care of. Or so he says. Now if only all the others who are not day laborers in Russia can be as well served and looked after, the millennium in the shape of a government might be said to have arrived, might it not? Alas, as I have pointed out elsewhere, all are not so well looked after, and until they are, Communism will not be pronounced a success by them at least.

In the meantime, in connection with factories, plants, transportation, housing, etc.—the general material industrial picture which Russia presents at this time—is quite the most interesting I have ever seen anywhere, because

never anywhere before in my life have I seen an attempt on the part of an entire government to manufacture and distribute properly all the necessities of a people as well as to employ, house, safeguard, transport, entertain, and otherwise look after and care for a population as large as that which occupies Russia. The size of this great task! The number of factories required; the number of trains, trucks, ships, in fact all forms of transportation! And the rush and hurry and strain in connection with informing a people that they need almost every known thing and then at the same time of attempting through the labors of the same people to supply them. Positively, if it were not for the fact that Russia is so vast and that to-day so much in the way of manufactured product can be poured from one well-organized plant, one would expect to find the great, snowy land fairly dotted with manufacturing plants and their belching chimneys. As it is, so enormous is the land area, so far-flung the cities and towns, and so effective the factories as well as so limited the buying capacity of the public as well as the manufacturing equipment of the Government at present, that at first you are a little dubious as to the existence of manufactories anywhere—that is, in any number or size. So many peasant villages go by—such vast areas of seemingly untrodden snow. At last, however, and by degrees, you discover that the large number of cities and towns, scattered though they may be, are brisk enough. Also that in various sections of Russia are fascinating centers for this and that—along the northern or arctic shore for fisheries and furs; in northern Siberia for furs and lumber and grain; in Kuzbas and the Donetz Basin for everything relating to coal, steel, iron, salt, manganese and various necessary and related chemicals. In Baku, or Trans-Caucasia rather, oil; in Kasakstan horses and wool; in the Caucasus proper wine; in the principal large cities,

such as Kharkov, Kiev, Rostov, Saratov, Moscow and Leningrad and all the northern and near western cities manufactories of all such things as clothing, rubber goods, furniture, utensils, and what not else.

In short, in traveling here and there in Russia—and always over enormous spaces, as it seemed to me—I was constantly passing in this place and that—and always in the flattest and most windswept of areas, as it seemed to me—the newest and most startling groups of manufacturing buildings, their various chimneys belching smoke or fire, and being told on inquiry that this or that was being made here—glassware or furniture or pottery or electric power or rubber or tobacco. Or that in this great building telephones were being made; in that one flax rugs or rope; again here a refined type of linen toweling or sheeting, or both; and there farming machinery, or tin cans. And, of course, in many places—but principally in the two regions previously referred to—enormous steel and iron plants. In Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkov, Odessa and elsewhere were not only huge rubber but cloth and furniture factories; also great plants for the manufacture of engines, cars, trucks, farming machinery, shoes, paints, sawed and shaped lumber, silks, candy, canned goods, and foodstuffs of all kinds. Indeed, on a number of occasions, and particularly at night—between midnight and dawn—when chancing to look out of my sleeping car window I was sometimes most markedly impressed by what appeared to be, and in a waste of snow, a great manufacturing plant brilliantly lighted, every window blazing and apparently hundreds and hundreds of employees at work. And this, I was told, was undeniably the case. For having but a given amount of machinery in certain fields, it was necessary to make the most of it; in other words, to run the plant at top speed, as many as three shifts a day in order to supply even par-

tially an undersupplied public with what it was waiting for. In addition new plants hourly being built and always where possible close either to the raw material required or the regions they are intended to supply. Hence factories in new and strange places; complete Government control of everything adjusting all this without difficulty.

At the same time and in connection with all this, I visited various plants in quite every city to which I repaired, and everywhere I went I was pleasantly impressed by the cleanliness, the modernity of the building and equipment; and in some instances—usually where piece-work was the method of working—with the speed with which the work was being done; also, the enthusiasm of the workers for their then condition and reward. In Leningrad, for instance, I visited The Red Triangle, the largest rubber factory in Russia, so I was told. It employed then 16,000 workers—fifty-one per cent men and forty-nine per cent women. It was one of four such plants of the All-Russian Rubber Trust. Here the whole process of rubber production was carried out, via the new Ford system of eight to thirty-six persons to a process—the making of one thing—an overshoe, water bag, roll of tubing, comb, ball, doll, rubber tire or what you will. Quite all of the rooms were enormous, as I found the workers at times looking like small upright pegs in the distance.

On this occasion, after looking over the factory all day, I finally interviewed the Director, Alexander Adamovitch Janen, a short, heavy man with curling mustaches, heavy arched brows, keen eyes, and a broad, shrewd, and good-natured face. He walked with a limp and was shabbily dressed in a baggy old gray suit and dark shirt. He had worked, so he told me, twenty-one years in this factory as a worker and only since the revolution had he risen to be chief director. At the time we talked, he told me, all

of the 108 engineers connected with this plant were Russian. Previously they had had specialists from America and even now regularly sent their own technicians over to America (and this in spite of immigration laws) to investigate and study. The highest paid technician in this factory received 600 roubles a month and his living quarters; the lowest paid worker 60 roubles.

But before the revolution, Janen informed me, sixty per cent of the workers in that plant were illiterate, whereas now only one per cent were so. And, for every rouble of production, they spent thirty-two per cent for the social welfare of the workers. Yet, as he pointed out, since factories in Russia are not run for private but rather general or public profit, this disbursement was no evil but a good one. The comfort of all the people is the object of the Government.

Choosing to disagree with his arraignment of capitalism, I went on to inquire where America would be without its capitalists, money geniuses, inventors, and what not else, and I traced the rise and services of various financial giants—Colonel Cornelius Vanderbilt and the railroads; Jay Cooke and the financing of the Civil War; John D. Rockefeller and oil; Pullman and the sleeping car; Carnegie and the steel industry and his libraries; Armour and the meat industry; Ford and his car; Hearst, Crocker, Stanford, and others, and the Union Pacific. I explained what they had done for a land that then needed to be developed and developed quickly by genius functioning individually and for gain. I insisted that always the big brain had powers and capacities for service which the little one had not and which it must respect, though I held no brief for exploitation and least of all for tyranny. The lion and the lamb, I said, should lie down within an at least reasonable distance of each other.

But he would not agree with me. No, no. All capitalists were bloodsuckers riding on the backs of the workers and must be hobbled, or harnessed, like a horse and compelled to draw the heavy burdens for the little man. And please God here in Russia it was so. If a man wanted position, he must serve and for the same wages as the little man. I agreed that this might be made true if the proletariat continued to maintain an armed dictatorship and could not be outwitted by a strong man with a big brain. It might even be possible by catching all people young (à la the Catholic Church) to psychologize the strong brain as well as the weak into believing that Communism was right—the only truth. But I was not sure. Nature was by no means entirely collective or entirely individualistic. Here and there was an individualistic animal; here and there a collective herd. Both did well, only at times the individualistic animal preyed and thrived on the herd; at other times the herd benefited by the individual.

"But where this first was true the individual should be exterminated!" he added.

"All right," I responded, "be it so, only catch your children early, before the religionist or the individualist gets them, and train them to kill the individualist."

"We will catch the individualist and train him to believe in Communism," he replied.

"It is the only way you will down him," I said.

But I wrote in his book: "I have talked with and learned from an able man."

Again in this same city, I visited the Red Putilov, a great locomotive engine works in Leningrad. This was built, as I understood, in 1835. Before the war, in the days of the Czar, it employed 35,000 men. To-day it employs only 11,000. They make locomotives, tractors (an unauthorized copy of the Ford), also special machinery on

order. Not being of a mechanical turn, the plant, to me at least, was more or less meaningless. And while the Director, as usual, painted a fair picture of progress, I could not quite believe it, since previously I had been informed that orders for engines were even then being given to the Baldwin Locomotive Company of Philadelphia and to a company in Switzerland—engines which really should have been building here. The answer they always give, not only here but elsewhere in Russia when things are not just as they should be, is that Russia is lacking in capital and expert technicians. They must first find the money or grow the technicians in their own schools and factories before they can do much better. Well, it may be so.

But in my humble judgment there are already too many foreign and too few Russian technical directors in Russia, and many, too many, local labor authorities. The emphasis is always—and first—on the rights and proper care of labor, which seemed to me at that time at least to be much too heavy. There should have been, as I saw it, much more emphasis on the productive power, technique, skill and speed of the workers, less on the rights and comfort of labor. But then Russia is for the workingman—his ease and comfort at this present time and none other. (I only hope he truly appreciates what is being done for him.) But this supervision by labor burdens every industry in the land, and, as I heard, hinders intelligent technical direction from wherever it may be derived. Over every technical director is an ordinary and often uninformed labor official with final labor authority. Nonetheless, all factories are by no means poorly conducted. You find many, as in the case of the tobacco factories in Rostov and Kiev, the steel and iron works in Kiev and Kharkov, the candy, bread and furniture factories in Moscow, Lenin-grad, Nijni-Novgorod, and elsewhere, that appeared to me,

at least, to be interesting specimens of what well-conducted factories should be—clean, busy, well-managed, and productive. In consequence I concluded that there must be Red Directors and Red Directors—as the Communist heads or directors who have risen from the ranks of labor of the different factories are called.

Yet if one is to believe the reports of the Government production chiefs, the various factories in Russia do not as yet meet, let alone outrun, their cost. Thus Rykov, President of the Supreme Economic Council, frankly states that the cost of production is much too high—in many instances two and a half times that of the same type of product in other countries. And while thirty-three and one-third per cent of this extra cost can, as he states, be charged to funds devoted to the betterment of the condition of the worker (social welfare, insurance, vacations, pregnancy of women workers, cultural work), and something more to antiquated machinery which the Government has as yet no money to replace, nevertheless there still remains a great discrepancy.

But others who study the problem claim that all will be overcome by two things: one the introduction of the most improved type of machinery, and the other the future higher technical skill of the workers themselves. In this respect, of course, Russia is keen to follow America as also in the matter of standardization of products, à la Ford. "A lever of industrial progress is the standardization of products," says Trotzky. "It is applicable not only to matches, brushes, and textiles, but also to the most intricate machinery. We must put a stop to the arbitrary demands of the purchaser." (How unlike America in that respect, which says—we must arbitrarily create a special demand.) And Stalin himself expresses Russia's industrial plan as "The union of Russian revolutionary in-

spiration with the American practical spirit. This is the essence of practical Leninism," he says.

As to the actual details of social welfare in all of these factories it is to be noted that everything in the life of the worker centers about his place of work—first the job itself, then the insurance department, the medical dispensary, the local of the Communist Party, the cultural department, and his trade union club, which not only educates but also entertains. The worker also votes from his place of work, and lives in the community dwelling of his place of work.

As to the method of all this the trade union club elects a committee of workers to look after the interests of all. This committee consists of fifteen members, three of whom devote all of their time to the work and receive salaries from the factory. A collective agreement is reached between the workers and the management, and it is the duty of the committee to see that this is carried out. In case of disputes between an employer and a worker, a "conflict commission," on which management and workers are equally represented, makes the decision. This committee also investigates the productive ability of the worker, and if he falls below a certain norm, supports the employer in his complaint. Every trade union local also elects a representative to the local soviet.

Each factory, as I saw for myself, has a dining room and also a nursery where young children and infants may be left for ten hours of the day. Nursing mothers are given two hours' freedom from their working time, on pay, to come and nurse their babies. There are trained nurses in attendance, cribs for the infants, playrooms for the older children and beds in which they take their midday sleep, dining rooms, and a glass-enclosed promenade.

Before the revolution there were no sanitary inspectors

in Russia. Now sanitary labor inspection is compulsory, there being women inspectors in districts with large numbers of working women.

Wages are determined, not, as here, by the state of the labor market but by the general economic state of the country and the real possibilities that exist for wage-earning. All wage-earners, after working at one job not less than five and a half months, are entitled to an annual vacation of two weeks, with pay. Workers in harmful occupations receive an additional fortnightly vacation. The Rest Homes throughout Russia—which are the villas which originally belonged to the capitalists—are usually located in the suburbs of the larger towns and here the worker receives a cot, free food, medical service if needed, and cultural and educational entertainment.

Nowhere may the working day exceed eight hours, with a six-hour day for minors between sixteen and eighteen. For harmful occupations, like those associated with the direct handling of quicksilver, white lead, dangerous mining, the day is as low as four hours.

In one factory in particular—near Nijni-Novgorod—where hemp was being turned into twine, rope and carpets—I was interested in an incident that seemed to me typical of the Russian temperament and the Russian outlook, and somewhat different to what might ordinarily occur in America—maybe not. The place had been, and still was, very badly ventilated. Lung trouble was not uncommon, and there had been some protest in some rooms of the factory—not all. In consequence—since not all were so badly affected—a ballot of all the workers in the factory was one day called for in order to determine whether a majority of the workers would prefer (1) an increase in wages for all or (2) the expenditure of 350,000 roubles in order to improve the ventilation in such rooms as most affected

the lungs of the particular workers therein. Without a dissenting vote, all of the workers voted to improve the ventilating conditions of the minority, and so not to increase their own salaries. Would the vote be the same here?



CHAPTER XII

WOMEN IN PRESENT-DAY RUSSIA

CONSIDERING the former position of women in Russia, it is evident that the revolution has completely changed their social and economic conditions. Women were regarded, especially among the peasants, as so much property; they had no civil rights; parents arranged marriages without consulting the wishes of their children; virginity was the chief requisite in a bride, and adultery on the part of a wife was considered a terrible crime. Naturally, among the intelligentsia and upper classes, these customs were not so strictly observed, but such was the official position.

I saw an excellent film in Leningrad, called "Women of Riojansky," with some very lovely photography of village scenes, which showed that among the older generation in the villages the old ideas still exist. A stern old peasant had chosen a wife for his younger son the while he himself was casting covetous eyes on her young beauty. Previous to this he had already unofficially taken unto himself the widow of his elder son who was killed in the European War. Because he had refused to give his blessing to her marriage, his only daughter had been forced to live out of

wedlock with her lover, and hence in deepest disgrace in the community. Once the younger son was wedded, he was called to war and after some time news came that he had been killed. His young wife, now a drudge in the household and fields of the old peasant, was attacked by him, and in an atmosphere of envious hatred on the part of the old peasant's wife and the brother's widow, she bore a child. Then the young husband unexpectedly returned. The other women folk out of spite hid the real truth about the fatherhood of the child, and the girl in despair threw herself into the river. Too late, the young man, learning the truth, faced his father.

An anti-climax, which spoiled the artistic effect of the picture but supplied the customary propaganda, was reached when the outcast daughter, a member of the Communist Party, took the illegitimate baby to the children's home and day nursery which the local soviet had built to help free peasant mothers from domestic drudgery and the burden of illegitimate children. This picture was widely shown in the villages as propaganda against the old customs still existing in peasant homes.

With the revolution, of course, the double standard of sex morals was swept away, and in fact, for a time, at least, women went even farther than men in the new freedom. The official attitude has been, and still is, that the sex life of men and women is no one's business but their own, but that the natural consequences of these relations—offspring—are most decidedly the business of society and the joint responsibility of the parents. Men and women may live together as long as they like without registering, and, as economic considerations play a negligible rôle in the choice of mates, "free love" in its proper meaning can be said to have full sway since the revolution. Communists are inclined to consider moral scruples in such matters as

bourgeois and un-Marxian, and an old-fashioned girl is likely to be reminded that she is "bourgeois" by a suitor whose advances she rejects. (The term "bourgeois" is used in Russia to indicate anything unpleasant or opposed to class thinking or class rule.)

On the other hand, it must be admitted that a certain economic consideration, sordid as it may seem to comfortable America, exists at the present time for men as well as women. Due to the acute housing shortage in the larger centers, there are really many marriages for the sake of a room, or part of a room, or even half of a bed. These marriages are as often unregistered as not, and in case of divorce astounding situations sometimes result, as when the party thus ousted can find no other living quarters. In fact, many couples continue to live together simply for this reason. An American girl in Moscow told me for instance that she had been flattered by the attentions of a young literary critic, until she learned that, having secured a divorce from his wife and out of chivalry having vacated their room, the poor fellow was going from house to house sleeping on the charity of his friends. As she had a room alone, the circumstantial evidence was against him.

This unbridled freedom has led, of course, to excesses, but on the whole it has brought about a wholesome attitude toward sex on the part of young people. Also lately the Communist Party has made an effort to check excesses by education and by calling its members to account when they go too far. Thus the papers frequently give space to such cases, the daily newspaper of the Young Communists—*Komsomolskaya Pravda*—for instance, giving publicity to the case of a young Communist who had been living with a girl comrade but who when he found that she was going to have a child hurriedly got a transfer to another town for Party work. There he began living with another com-

rade, whom he treated in the same way. But she, being a more spirited girl, brought the matter to the attention of the Party local. Whereupon the young man was summoned before a commission. There he, shall I say, so brazenly quoted Marx and Lenin, terming the procedure "petty bourgeois morality," and boasting that his temperament demanded variety, that he was forthwith expelled from the Party, a result which suggested to me at the time that possibly the Russian rank and file will gradually become as conventional as any other people—in short that religion or no religion, written law or no written law the average man and woman rather leans toward and even prefers to compel a certain amount of stability, subsequently dubbed morality, or duty, or law, or the will of God.

However, on the whole, to-day, there is, as I learned, a fine spirit of comradeship between boys and girls and men and women only entirely lacking in those superficial manifestations of chivalry so very, very common in America and so often arising from the property instinct only. In Russia, for instance to-day, romantic love is, on the surface, at least, held in some disdain by the new generation, which vainly seeks to masque with dull materialistic argument the naturally sentimental and romantic Russian temperament. But it crops out just the same and love tragedies are not any more uncommon in Russia than they are elsewhere, since Eros rules even Communists. And in consequence even the marriage laws of Communism have in the course of ten years undergone some changes. There is now for instance a more conservative tendency; registration is encouraged, and there is more protection afforded women by law than men. Registered or unregistered, and as in America, the fact that a man and woman live together makes a marriage and attaches certain responsibilities to both parties. In case of sickness, for instance, either is bound to support

the other, and in case of separation, such small property as may be is divided jointly. Where there are children, the couple must jointly support them. In consequence, to-day the courts are full of unmarried mothers who file claims against alleged fathers for "alimony," as support for the child is termed. If there is reasonable proof of the fatherhood of the child, the man named is held responsible by the court and must pay one-fourth of his income for its support, or a sum fixed by the court.

I heard of an amusing incident. A woman charged a certain man with being the father of her infant. He denied it and called his friend as witness in his behalf. The friend, in a loyal effort to defend the man, testified that he also had had relations with the woman. "Very well," decided the judge, "you can both contribute to the support of the child!" There are, of course, unscrupulous women who misuse the "alimony" laws for offspring, just as they are misused in this country by divorced wives. Indeed, some women have already found it profitable to present several names of possible fathers to the courts in which they have appeared! Others, with more sagacity, privately demand alimony for their children from a little group of possible fathers.

Divorce in Russia to-day is just as free as marriage—even freer, because a registered marriage requires at least the presence of both contracting parties. (I believe, however, that in the Ukraine, one party can register a marriage and if within a certain length of time after the other party has been legally notified he does not object, the marriage becomes valid.) A divorce, however, may be obtained by either party independent of the other. A wife can come alone to "ZAGS" (Office for the Registration of Civil Acts), tell the clerk she wishes a divorce, and it is granted, usually in a few minutes. The necessary

record is made, she is given a small paper and her passport (a document which every careful Russian citizen always carries) is stamped "Unmarried" in place of "Married." The supposition is that desire on the part of either party to dissolve the union is sufficient reason for granting a divorce. Until recently there was absolutely no time element in the matter. A couple could be married and divorced on the same day at the same registry office. But the statistics of short time marriages became so alarming that recently a new regulation was put into effect stipulating that a divorce can be granted only a certain length of time after marriage—some weeks, I believe. The charges for registration and divorce are nominal, only about five dollars.

Birth control occupies a prominent place in discussions of the condition of women in any country. Like all governments which require soldiers for their armies, the Soviet Government is not enthusiastic on the subject and encourages a high birth rate. However, there are no legal restrictions to the dissemination of birth control knowledge, and abortions are not considered illegal. It is, however, illegal for a private practitioner to perform an unscientific abortion—not give the patient the care demanded in the public clinics.

A workingwoman who becomes pregnant may have a free abortion just as she can have free medical treatment of any kind in the clinic of the place of her work. I understand though that there is supposed to be some good reason given by the woman for making such a request of the physician in charge, such as inability to support the child, ill health, etc. I also understand that this is usually only a formality, and when complied with the doctor gives her a "spravka" (statement) as to her condition and tells her to go to her local soviet where there is a special commis-

sion to decide on such cases. Eventually, official permission secured, she goes to the maternity hospital in her district where—if she is fortunate and doesn't have to wait her turn beyond the danger point—she is given a curettement by a specialist and kept in the hospital at least one week, all free of charge. Her clinic reports the case to her place of work, which must grant her leave on pay for this period. If the woman says she wants the baby she is cared for throughout pregnancy and confinement free of charge, with eight weeks' vacation on pay. All this procedure, while open, is not public, and nowhere along the line does any one ask: "Is she married?" or "Who is the father of her child?"

The economic independence of women in Soviet Russia is not merely an official theory but a fact. Women are encouraged and educated in the idea of supporting themselves, be they single, married or even mothers, and every facility of an impoverished state is contributed to make this possible. First of all, there is no difference in the valuation put on the industrial labor of women and men. Trade union laws make equal pay for equal work of the two sexes absolutely compulsory, and every form of employment, from ditch digger to engineer, is open to women. There are even women soldiers in the Red Army, and, notably, a young woman, married to an officer and the mother of two children, who has just been graduated from the Military Academy in Moscow with the rank of general.

Prostitution, which to a great extent is an indication of the economic condition of women, shows itself to be decreasing steadily in new Russia. But for the time being, at least, there are the remnants of the women of the old bourgeoisie, many of whom go into this oldest of professions because they are untrained and temperamentally unfitted for industrial work.

But what is of great significance in the working out of the new moral and economic code for women is the definite growth of a social stigma on the woman who is not self-supporting. The head of the Women's Section of the Russian Communist Party told me that the number of registered unemployed in the Soviet Union is greatly swelled by the fact that now so many housewives register at the Labor Exchange for work. She herself was besieged by wives who begged her to find them some kind of employment, as they could not bear to be classed as housewives, and by mothers who looked forward to release from household drudgery in factories where they could put their children in day nurseries and eat in the factory dining rooms.

As I said, to make the economic equality of women and men a working theory, everything is done by society to help the woman free herself from the age-old slavery of domestic duties. Thus there have been established and are now in full operation community kitchens and dining rooms and laundries, and day nurseries in all factories and other working organizations where mothers can leave their children, even infants, time being allowed mothers during working hours to nurse their babies.

Another condition which makes it easier for the workingwoman in Russia to support herself is the cheapness of domestic help. This, however, is somewhat to be deplored, as Russia is overrun with servants and nursemaids of the lowest order of intelligence and training, mostly women from the villages; furthermore, it is considered that the psychological effect of individual servants is detrimental to the morale of a proletarian state. These domestic workers, however, all belong to a trade union, are fully protected by social insurance which the employers must pay, have two weeks' vacation on pay yearly, and special clothing, and compensation if discharged. So while

their wages are very low (ten to fifteen dollars a month), they are well taken care of by society. This cheap domestic labor means that the simplest factory worker or typist can have a maid at home to do the housework and look after the children. But the housewife who has a servant is looked upon with contempt as a "parasite" and a "bourgeois," and the attitude of the Communist Party is against servants unless it is impossible for its women members to combine their party and industrial work in any other way. On the other hand, defenders of the personal servant system maintain that it is only a fair division of labor to let an untrained woman do housework in order to free a trained woman for other duties. But naturally, the Party is working toward a highly organized community life which will abolish such private institutions as personal servants.

What constitutes the important difference between the women of Soviet Russia and those of other countries is that public opinion, plus official sanction which makes a fact of the equality of the sexes, places no social stigma on the unmarried mother or on unregistered marriages or divorces, makes motherhood not only voluntary but the responsibility of the State, and gives equal educational opportunities for women and men and equal remuneration for labor.

It does not follow that the material condition of women is better in Russia than in the outside world. On the contrary, the majority of women in the United States undoubtedly live far better than the Russian women. But, primarily, this is due to the vast difference in the standard of living which in turn is due to the backward industrial state of Russia. It must be admitted that the public attitude in America toward women, while on the whole liberal, nevertheless contains a definite disapproval of a married woman, and especially a mother, working outside the home. This attitude has its own psy-

chological effect on the woman, who from her childhood is brought up with the idea of marriage being her ultimate profession. The resulting waste of trained workers as Communists at least see this is appalling. There is not only the great evil of the "stop-gap" professions for women, for which girls take a half-hearted, superficial training in order to support themselves until they can find a husband to support them, but there is the intelligent woman who earnestly trains herself for a useful profession and then finds herself compelled to abandon it when she marries. Many such women remain childless because of their dread of being tied irrevocably to the home, since a nurse for the baby is out of the question for any but the rich. They expend their mental energy somewhat futilely in social work or women's clubs. If they have children, by the time the children are old enough to free them, it is too late to return to their profession.

So in spite of the infinitely higher standards of living for women in America, they are, to a much greater extent, household drudges. Of course, the vastly more modern equipment of the American home as compared with the Russian home is a great labor-saver, but this is offset by the enormous complication of housework in America compared with the simplicity of the one- or two-room apartment in Russia, where cooking and eating are quite often done in community kitchens and dining rooms.

But there still remains the question of the sanctity of the home, which, it would appear, is going out of existence in Russia. Whether or not this is a step backward, only time will tell. If the American woman chooses the profession of housewife and mother and voluntarily keeps to it, well and good. It is an honorable profession and possibly best for society in the long run. But there are widespread indications that intelligent American women do not

voluntarily choose this profession and are, in part at least, in rebellion against it.

All this may explain, to some extent, why some American women can live more contentedly in Russia, under conditions of life amounting to almost physical hardship, than in their own rich and comfortable land. Madame Litviniov, an English woman and the wife of the Foreign Minister, told me that when she was out of Russia she was always restless—running here and there, competing with whosoever was competing for anything—clothes, contacts, what not. But once in Russia again all these things seemed to fall away; nothing mattered much. Clothes were poor, to be sure; social advance all but impossible; wealth impossible. "And yet I am happier," she said. "Like everybody else, I work, part time for my husband as typist and translator, part time for one of the Government bureaus as translator. I get 200 roubles a month. You see how I dress. And I have no social life here. There is none to speak of. Yet I am happier here than anywhere, I think, much happier, and I often wonder why."

I could not answer her at the time, but now I think I can. It is due to the absence of national worry over one's future or the means of subsistence. In Russia one's future and one's subsistence are really bound up with that of the entire nation. Unless Russia fails you will not fail. If it prospers, you are certain to prosper. Therefore a sense of security, which for some at least replaces that restless, painful seeking for so many things which here you are not allowed to have.



CHAPTER XIII

RELIGION IN RUSSIA

ONE of the problems which still vexes the Soviet régime, although little is said of it, is the persistence and force of the Russian Greek Church. With the abolition of the Czarist rule, the complete overthrow of the organism of the Holy Orthodox Church was thought necessary, because during many centuries the Church and the State had been interwoven in such a way as almost, in many instances, to function as one. Plainly, as all who know history are aware, they were agreed on the necessary ignorance of the masses, their slavish acceptance of the authority of Church and State. But with the arrival of the Soviets and their rule, the situation changed. Now the State was determined to educate and free the masses, and the Church, seeing injury and even destruction to itself through this process, was determined to fight the State through the ignorance of the masses. It is the dogmatic religionist's way the world over. Only ignorance deliberately forced upon the child anywhere saves him. During this period (1918-19-20), fanatics of the Church vied with each other for the privilege of martyrdom; on the other hand, fanatical anti-religionists,

in the Communist Party and out, preached a policy of extermination. In many instances, churches were closed; in many more, their pious dogmas and mystical frauds were ruthlessly and witheringly exposed. I have mentioned the sign, "Religion is the opiate of the people," which glows opposite the shrine of the Iberian Virgin in Moscow, and I myself saw some of those paraffine saints so miraculously preserved from century to century in the different churches in Russia. There are several in the historic Petscherskaya Lavra monastery in Kiev, and from one as a test I chipped a bit of paraffine or wax—most easily removed with my knife, the while four or five old faithful Russians were smack-smacking with their lips the edge of the handsome if dusty sarcophagus which held it. And yet, since the first burst of opposition there has come a sort of official truce (of the Alphonse and Gaston hand-kissing type), between the Communists and the leaders of the Orthodox Church, whereby the Church adopts the attitude of sincere loyalty and allegiance to the official Soviet rule, counseling all of its prelates, priests and faithful to separate the policies of the Church from the politics of the Soviets, and the Communists do not now talk so much about completely effacing the Church. Nonetheless, via the schools, newspapers and propaganda in general there is a dogmatic religion effacing process under way which may yet do for the Greek Orthodox Church entirely. Certainly not a few of the great old churches stand empty or are maintained by a mere sprinkling of old worshipers—rarely young ones.

But in opposition to this, naturally, there persists much underground work. For the politics of the Soviets, if persisted in, must spell the death of the organic Church as it is to-day. Russia's communistic philosophy—its purely materialistic approach to the problems of life—gainsays the old

orthodox dogmas of the Church at every turn. Not only that, but the Church has lost the child (except in the home) to whom it could teach its dogmas as truths. The State now has the child in the schools and can teach it what it will—among other things that religion, and especially organized and dogmatic religion, is more or less of a farce and a trumpery, and worse, as the sign reads, an “opiate.” So despite the now somewhat kindly overtures and phrases of the Soviet State toward Holy Church, it cannot help but feel that its life depends on something more than loyalty to the Soviet State. And in consequence, as one hears and sees, there is little more than a cat and mouse attitude, the mouse in this instance being Holy Church, trying to appear loyal while at the same time actually not relaxing from its dogmas any more than it can possibly help. And while the Soviet State politely reiterates that a man cannot live without an ideal, and that what the non-religionist would call an ideal or a cause, a devout adherent of the Orthodox Russian Church might well call religion or faith—(and that therefore there is room for both Communism and Religion—even the Greek Orthodox variety—in the same Russian bed)—nevertheless the Soviets do not retreat from their anti-dogmatic instruction of the child. Indeed, the Soviet schools everywhere—and there are no other—maintain a purely agnostic course.

And when you trouble to look into the nature of present-day church attendance in Russia, you find that it is the old and the middle-aged—scarcely ever the young—who are to be found within. Even the Orthodox priests and their adherents themselves admit that church attendance has been cut from fifty to sixty per cent. Worse, as priests and believers will assure you, the young, almost en masse, will not go to church. They laugh at the faith of their elders. Worse still, when they marry or baptize

their young or bury their dead even they will have nothing to do with any church ceremony, in short, when children appear they are no longer baptized in the faith. The priests, as three of them in different villages confessed to me, have a hard time. They live but more by the charity of the believers still remaining in their care than because of their faith. Yet when I asked whether, in their opinion, and because of this orthodox religion (the Greek Church itself) would or might die in Russia, they grew cautious. For such an opinion was certain to be carried not only to their orthodox superiors but also to the local soviet. And in either direction it was likely to cause terrible harm—in the first direction a reprimand or expulsion. So each "Little Father," or "Batushka," as he is called, contented himself with saying that he could not say, that I had better consult some one higher in authority, one with a wide outlook on Russia. In these days, truly, the priest and his flock are hard put to it to make the church books balance.

But so much one can see with one's own eyes anywhere. Priests and monks in such poor clothing and looking so thin and pining that one is moved to sorrow, although always one would hear from some Russian that surely they could go to work at something else, and that many had. Said one Communist official in Rostov to me: "Some are cooks, and some are waiters, and some clerks and some librarians, or carpenters, or bricklayers. Not a few have taken to trade. There are ex-priests who are peddlers or traders, and with a trader's license." And I myself, in quite every part of Russia that I visited, found priests begging on the streets, sometimes outside the more important churches, where, because of their cloth, they might yet expect the charity of a few religious survivors and where, along with other beggars who were by no means

priests, they stood, eyes down, awaiting a small dole of some kind.

And here and there, great churches closed. The Cathedral in Tiflis—one of the most beautiful in Russia—turned into a young workers' club, with the young workers playing tennis and hand ball on the lovely, smooth grounds outside. And monasteries also closed. One that I saw in Moscow—the Saikonos Passky, a lovely walled collection of dormitories and belfries, with a cathedral-like chapel in the center—turned into a school and home for woodworkers. Another, the Damilovsky, turned into a Communist school for girls. In Kiev, the Petscherskaya Lavra—one of the loveliest in all Russia—and formerly the middle religious center of the nation and a celebrated pilgrimage point—turned, in part, into a printing plant for the very progressive Ukrainian Republic, in part into a factory for the manufacture of wooden arms and legs. As to its other portions or wings there were museums for the preservation of religious art and historic costume. Here, as elsewhere, of course, were ragged monks loitering and sustaining themselves by the sale of picture cards, blessed candles, and in some cases by acting as guides and displaying to a few curious strangers, myself among them, the miraculously preserved saints and prelates of other days—one of whom, as I have said, his miraculous preservation I troubled to test for myself.

But I stray. Realizing what a peculiar and rather exciting problem was presented here, I sought an interview with the reigning Archbishop of Moscow, the then Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church and around whom for several years had centered the conflict between Church and State. But when my request was about to be granted he departed on some mission and I was not able to reach him. In consequence, in Leningrad where I next

chanced to be, I turned to Platon, Archbishop of the Russian *Reformed* Church, an organization rumored to have been and still to be fostered by the Soviet leaders with a view to capturing the control of the old church by means of a liberal wing working from within. At the time that his name and position were made clear to me, he, through such forces or ideals as he had been able to put forward, had managed, or so I was told, to secure control of about one-third of the adherents and property of the old church. An interview was therefore requested by and arranged for me by the Leningrad Branch of VOX (the Soviet Society for International Cultural Relations), and the Archbishop and myself met in the headquarters of the Society in Leningrad, in an old palace, seized by the Bolsheviks in 1917.

This Platon, a very handsome man by the way, and not much over forty-five, was, when he came, dressed in a simple, long black robe. His long brown hair fell to his shoulders, and above his soft, long beard was a calm, beautiful face, with large, brilliant, gray eyes. He had that Christ-like expression so often affected by Russian priests, but his air was that of a diplomat. And when through interpreters—and with two stenographers present, one of which Platon requested—I asked him was he willing to talk freely of the then religious condition of Russia, he nodded amiably, waiting for my opening question.

"Well, then, to begin with," I said: "How many of all the citizens of the old Russian world did the old pre-war Orthodox Greek Church represent?"

"Fully eighty-two per cent," he replied.

"And now, what per cent of the present Russian population adheres to any faith, Orthodox Greek or the Reformed branch which you represent?"

"Not more than fifty per cent of the old eighty-two per cent, I should think."

"And what per cent of this present religious population are now adherents of your part?"

"Thirty-two per cent."

"And what per cent would you say believes in the old Orthodox Greek branch?"

"Sixty-eight per cent."

"But why did your part separate from the old church?"

At that he paused and meditated, weighing a possible reply most carefully. After a time he went on as follows, the words interpreted to me in his presence and verified as approximately correct by all who were present—the stenographers, interpreters, and those who had brought about the meeting.

"After the October revolution of 1917 the situation of the church was not in conformity with the new order. Still the leaders of the old church thought to be able to continue to build a national Christian life in accordance with the old faith. This, as you know, conflicted with the new form of government. As a result, there was a full break with the old church, and this evolved a form of political terrorism on the part of the new government. There were conferences, of course, and then after a time a new course for the old church was laid out in decisions of a congress of its own leaders and followers. Tikhon, its then Patriarch and leader, showed at that congress that he wanted to save Russia and the church, but some of the leaders of the church addressed, in 1922, a petition to him in which they stated that if he entered upon a new policy it would have a bad influence on the future of the Russian church. The Patriarch replied that until the calling of a new congress he would abdicate his seat. It must be said that this decision of his as well as

his work in the congress mentioned was inspired by his wish to organize a church which could satisfy more adequately the living needs of the masses."

"But what were the proposed new principles of that congress?" I asked.

"I will not answer that directly, but must explain. The leaders of the old Greek Orthodox Church were, and are, mystical, deeply speculative, and more or less out of touch with modern conditions. Many of those most influential in the church at the time that this break with the Soviet Government occurred—and also before that, of course—were immured in monasteries in remote parts of Russia, reading and meditating upon the religious mysteries of our faith—but, after a fashion, that has endured for centuries. Yet, so early as 1905—in connection with the labor and political unrest of that time—there was a movement in the church itself to broaden the policy, and practices of the old Greek Church. But because of these immured 'saints,' as we might call them, and to whom I have referred, the proposed changes were constantly delayed and so failed of action. But after the revolution of 1917 the church was really in a serious political position. Many among its Communist opponents were extremists and heartily for its complete destruction. And this desperate and dangerous situation produced profound thought, certainly among the more progressive of the laity and clergy. But many of the leaders, and most of the laity, were still reactionary and conservative in their political point of view. They felt, or perhaps, better, feared, the necessity for change and were interminably slow in doing anything. It was in this situation that the Greek Reformed Church of which I am the head came into being. It grew out of the need for action, for bringing the old church more quickly to the more necessary reforms if it was to endure.

"But at that," he went on, "the majority of the church's general following (the illiterate masses in particular) was so reactionary that it believed and still believes that the suggested new or reformed church was nothing more than a political scheme on the part of the Soviet Government to destroy the old church. But that was not true. I was a part of the movement and I know that it drew its strength from the thought that while the old dogmas and formulas must be maintained, there should be some attempt made to abolish the deep and meaningless superstition of the people—place less emphasis on formalities and more on those things which while not disturbing the essential faith of the people would tend to align them with the new economic and social changes then in progress. We then believed, and still do, that it is possible to do this and we feel that we are accomplishing what we thought.

"But, of course, as a movement we were met with bitter opposition. Our every attempt to broaden the policy of the church within the church itself was frustrated. In consequence there came an open break. Some of the more progressive congregations of the old faith seceded. And it is these congregations and the more progressive of the laity of the old church that have since joined us and that now give us our strength—the strength of the present Reformed Church of which I am the head."

"But had the Soviet Government no direct, active political part in this change?—none in the situation which you describe as producing the Greek Reformed Church?"

"None that I know of. That it was interested in such a change is, of course, reasonable and obvious, but it took no active part in it."

"Neither you nor those who worked with you were directly encouraged by it?"

"We were not."

"Does it now allow your church to develop as you wish, or does it interfere?"

"The new Reformed Church realized that it must repair the mistakes of the old church, and in answer to the anathema of Tikhon pronounced upon it at the time of the separation, it stated officially that it legalized the social revolution and supported the Soviet Government. In consequence the Soviet Government gave full legal rights to our Reformed Church, and after six years we may say there is no interference on the part of the Government and on our side no interference with the Government."

"And what does your new church now offer which the old church refused?"

"The old church did not, and does not, refuse to effect certain reforms, but in the political struggle which came after the October revolution of 1917, the orthodox leaders were so busy with politics, and have been since, that as yet they have done nothing toward real reforms. The old church, as I have said, was generally led by priests in monasteries and episcopates who had lost theological contact with the masses. One of the ideals of our new or Reformed church is to liberate the believing masses from this influence of the old monastic group. But that does not mean that the new movement is entirely against monastics, for in general it supports the system. But in regard to marriage among the priesthood, the congress of the new church makes it lawfully possible for married priests to become high dignitaries."

"Is that what you consider one of the important reforms of the new Greek Church?"

"I know what you are thinking, and I will answer you presently. Dogmatically, this is an important reform. Married priests were before not permitted to aspire to the highest places in the church. But only two days ago

the Plenum of the Holy Synod of our Reformed Church, in preparation for the next congress, passed a resolution concerning married priests—i.e., that there should be no difference between simple priests and high dignitaries in their right to marry. Of course, this is not by any means the principal difference between the reformed and the old or Orthodox Church. One of the principal aims of the new church is to educate the people, decrease illiteracy, and in general bring the masses nearer to culture. As to dogma, we stand on the strict eastern forms of the Orthodox Church and like it hold close contact with the eastern Greek Church from which we derive."

"Then there has been no essential dogmatic change?"

"None. Mine is a purely orthodox church. In fact, the Orthodox eastern churches send their official representatives to the new Holy Synod of my church and by them it is considered the real representative of the Russian Orthodox Church."

"Do the dogmas of your Reformed as well as the Greek Orthodox Church coincide with those of the Roman Catholic Church in the west?"

"Many are the same, but not all. The western or Roman Church departed somewhat from the old beliefs, as we see it. The eastern Greek Church represents more closely the fundamental principles of Christ."

"To you then the Pope at Rome is not the divinely authorized vicar of Christ on earth?"

"No."

"And never has been?"

"No."

"Your general sacraments are about the same?"

"Yes."

"Confession?"

"Yes."

"Communion?"

"Yes."

"Baptism?"

"Yes."

"Marriage?"

"Yes."

"By the way, is your reformed church growing or is it failing?"

"The reformed church, as far as recognized as the real representative of the orthodox church, is getting stronger. The old Orthodox Church only recognized the Soviet Government in July, 1927, and now will be legalized. But at present there is a conflict for power among its leaders, which is delaying its progress. In our reformed church there cannot be this struggle for power, because by the very nature of the changes adopted power is placed not in one head but in all of the high dignitaries, and even the body of the church's followers since they have a voice in electing its high priests."

"Then you are really sovietizing your church?"

"No, we are only returning to the old or early customs of the Christian church, whose dignitaries were the elected representatives of the congregation."

"In other words, you are trying to make it like the early Christian church?"

"Yes."

"Does your church now do any social welfare work?"

"In every church organization of my faith there is a body of followers who do welfare work in their own community. But in addition to that—and as in the early Christian church—these followers must themselves take care of the church, do the cleaning, etc. They must also do intelligent Christian charity, help their neighbors."

"What is 'intelligent Christian charity'?"

"The old or Russian Orthodox Greek Church did not try to give material support to its followers or the public generally, but we try to organize brotherly material aid for those in need."

"But what form or forms does this take—hospitals, sanitariums, refuges like those of the present Soviet Government?"

"No. We do not take part in the organization of institutions which could only rival those of the present State. They are not needed under this type of government. But we do teach brotherly love and such action as should follow upon that. For example, when the earthquake occurred in the Crimea, we did not give direct aid, but when the Government made an appeal to the people for help the Reformed Church proposed to collect money in the church and give it to the Government fund. And this it did. During the famine, the Government demanded help from the churches. The old church said, if we give church treasures for famine relief we must do it officially through our church and not give those treasures into strange hands. But the new church said it is good that the State has organs to help the famine, and we will help through them."

"In other words, your church seeks to support the State instead of demanding that the State submit to the Church?"

"Yes."

"But is not this abdicating the supreme rulership and direction of the God you worship? Our American Catholic Church seems to think so."

"No. The ideology of our Reformed Church is different. We see the spirit of God—His hand—in certain necessary social changes, changes that oppose evil and aid good. Thus we feel that certain social improvements can spring from the will of the people—can even involve social revolution—and that this can bring about a social condition

not unlike the reign of God on earth which will come some day. This belief in moral social revolution is an important fact with us, and that is why now, at the present time, some of our followers are leaving us. They say revolt is not right, but we say that revolt of the oppressed against their oppressors is a natural, God-inspired development. In this we only follow the old prophets of the Bible."

"But is your church content to leave the education of the children to the State, or do you want to influence that education?"

"We think thus: that the intellectual development of the individual must be voluntary and not in any way forced, and therefore as long as the State takes care of education and as long as that education is in line with the social welfare of the masses, we think it dangerous to dictate the religious principles which must govern."

"Yet the church expects at some time to influence the individual with its principles does it not—especially when he is mature?"

"Our church does not leave the child without its influence. It reaches it through the Christian family. Also the child is permitted to participate freely in the mysteries of the church—is encouraged so to do. But as we see it, it is when the child is grown and can think for itself, or in other words, has attained to a degree of cultural development, and has begun to take an interest in all sides of life, that it is time and not before for the church to make its full propaganda."

"But suppose the child has previously been educated in the modern way—in science, Darwin, history, philosophy—how will the church approach him when he is grown? What will it have to offer?"

"If a person so educated has not at the same time lost interest in the church, the church has all kinds of materials

to present, and these of a scientific nature and in which he can find truth. For the mystery of life—its coördinating principle or principles—has not yet been dispelled by science. And awe and reverence are not being dispelled by greater knowledge. Rather it is only indifference to knowledge that dispenses with awe and reverence. Already to-day there are academies of religious science which produce religious scientists, and they will increase in number.”

“And you expect the young man of the future to be influenced by those?”

“I do.”

“In short, you maintain belief in the existence and supervision of a divine intelligence?”

“I do. The Reformed Greek Church does.”

“Yet if my reading of the present Soviet or Communistic faith is correct, it does not believe in the direction of a divine power. There is a public sign in Moscow which reads: ‘Religion is the Opiate of the People.’ ”

“I know of it. Nevertheless, we believe that the direction of a divine power is visible in many—most—of the idealistic principles of the present régime.”

“But the present Soviet régime will not trust the education of the child to any religion, yours included.”

“That is true.”

“Do you agree with that?”

“As I have indicated, we are a practical church organization. My personal opinion is that such training in general culture as is now given in Russia does not conflict with religious education as I have just outlined it.”

“But if the education of the child were in your hands, how would you proceed?”

“Naturally, the principles and dogmas of our faith could not and would not be ignored. But since we are faced with a condition which gives a general and helpful educa-

tion to the child, we content ourselves with the work, or perhaps better yet, the influence, of the church in the home. When the child is old enough we give it, as I have said, all material for as well as against our beliefs, and it must then decide for itself."

"But don't you feel that a child educated in the Soviet schools is certain to be directly in conflict with your dogmas, and could not afterwards—when grown—be persuaded to accept them?"

"I answer no. Modern science is not in complete conflict with religion. The mysteries are still with us, as the present quarrel between the Darwinians and the anti-Darwinians proves, and there are many who are sensitive to the mysteries and will seek for guidance outside the laws and rules furnished by a mechanistic philosophy. Yet I will add this. If men the world over—furnished a broad cultural and material education—cannot agree with our dogmas, then it means that our church will die. But that does not mean that religion will die. If we could believe that such a thing could happen, we could not go on with our work. Yet we do go on, because we believe that the need of a faith is something which will always remain."

"In the United States," I observed, "the Catholic Church in its parochial schools confines the education of the child mainly to subjects which will not conflict with its religious dogmas; in short, to practical subjects which it supplements with its religious training and its own religious history. Do you approve of that?"

"No, I do not. But as you see for yourself, there is no possibility of such a situation here. We are not permitted to educate, merely to influence, the child, if we can."

"And yet you still think that religion will not die?"

"I am sure of it. Indeed, as regards the eternal conflict between the Mechanistic and the religious theories, be-

tween the theory of a divine mind and an accidental material order, if ever the thesis of materialism should become very strong, an antithesis satisfying to the claims of the spirit will arise."

"There will always be an interpretation of life from two points you think, the spiritual and material?"

"I have studied philosophy, but it is difficult in a few words to discuss these questions. It would be better, I think, to reserve that for some time when both of us are amply provided with leisure. Just now, I think it is better to finish our discussion of the Greek Reformed Church movement. At present only a minority is with us, because we are not attempting mass conversion. What we do want is well-trained and cultured people who will spiritually understand and accept our faith. Naturally, our material resources are low. We are very poor, and the old orthodox church has organized a material boycott against us, has even deprived our followers, where possible, of positions and labor. But spiritually our organization is very strong and has connections with foreign churches and nuclei in Greek Orthodox churches abroad. And in that knowledge, and with full faith and peace, we face the future."



CHAPTER XIV

BOLSHEVIK ART, LITERATURE AND MUSIC (A)

BOLSHEVIK art is a difficult subject. Although I saw various forms of it, I am still dubious as to its value. In general it seemed to me to be in much too experimental a stage to be enjoyable. Furthermore, so much of it was of so purely a class or Communist turn (propaganda pure and simple), that I could feel but little of enduring value in it. Most of its subject matter was about the revolution, the civil wars, rarely the current life of Russia, which is really so much more arresting. I could not help wondering why. Why not the new kitchens, factories, sex complications, so strange to the eyes and minds of other lands? Why not?

Organizationally, there are two main groups: AKRR (Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia), which has the abbreviated name from the initial letters A-K-R-R, and LEF, or in English LEFT. Between these two groups there is a fundamental disagreement. AKRR emphasizes ideology rather than form or style. In fact, while always revolutionary in subject matter, its adherents quite often use old forms. Its value, I should say, is chiefly as

propaganda for the new order, and its general product pretty poor. Just before I left Russia, the Tenth Exhibit of AKRR was held in Moscow in the new Post Office building on Tverskaya and another general exhibit on Moskovaya. The first was opened in celebration of the Tenth Anniversary of the Red Army, and presented in paintings a history of the Revolution and its succeeding civil wars. As a chronicle, but not otherwise, it was interesting—old forms badly done.

On the other hand, the LEFT group, to which the more stirring and argumentative younger painters and writers belong, is more interesting. It is not only LEFT in art but in literature and philosophy. Through personal contact with some of its members and with others who were interested in them, I gathered that they emphasize form almost more, certainly as much as, idea. Yet even so, their themes are always revolutionary. Even LEFT form, which embraces constructivism—the principles of art for use only—is as revolutionary as its adherents can make it. Talking with Tretyakov, the playwright, a LEFT adherent and the author of "Roar, China" (a great success at the time I was in Moscow), I gathered that no LEFT would paint a picture for beauty alone but only to express an idea. (A ghastly thought!) Also I recall his claiming that art which is merely decorative has never endured. For instance, if a column is put on a building not primarily as a support, it can have no real, lasting beauty. Well, Ruskin preached something of the same, but it is not wholly true, not even partially so. Or what of Watteau, Ingres, Corot?

LEF's monthly journal, *Novi Lef* (*New Left*), is a lively little periodical of articles on literature, theater, and the kino. And its group includes such varied personalities as Meierhold, Director of the Meierhold Theater; Eisenstein, of the Moscow Sovkino, one of the most effective

and original of all the Soviet moving picture studios; Mayakovsky, Russia's most talked-of poet; Tretyakov, the playwright; Brikk, a literary critic; and in photography Rodchenko, a different if not wholly impressive worker in that field. But, I must say that what I saw of Rodchenko's work would indicate that he specializes in freak photography only. All his photographs were at queer angles. I cannot imagine the positions he and his camera must have taken to secure them. Principally upside down, I assume. In architecture and painting there are too many names to list here.

The influence of this Lef group is considerable since it reaches the workers' clubs—a great force in Russia—especially the Blue Blouse groups of actors, which follow in both form and theme the principles of LEFT. Tretyakov, Mayakovsky, and other literary lights of LEFT write skits for them. The subject matter appears to be entirely topical, embracing the idea of the "living newspaper," so popular in Russia. Too, the technique is quite original—no stage sets except the simplest properties, which the actors carry with them from club to club. A select group of Blue Blouses toured Germany recently, and they would like to come to America but are not allowed.

In connection with all this it should be said that to-day the theater is probably the most important factor in the Communistic educational program of Russia—more so now than ever in its history. Hence the influence of such a group as this LEFT which is approved by the Government. And through it or such of life ideas as it represents the Communists are seeking to reach the people. One point which illustrates this is this, that whereas the foreigner or "bourgeois" pays up to \$3 or \$4 for a seat, the workers, through their trade unions, may secure seats free or at a minimum price. Yet the season I viewed was ad-

mittedly dull. Revolutionary themes continued to predominate. Of these "Razlom" (The Break), an episode of the beginning of the October Revolution was considered the best. It was given at the Arbat Studio, in Moscow. The commander of a battleship at Odessa and his daughter, a nurse, were in sympathy with the Bolsheviks. The daughter's husband, an officer on the ship, was, on the other hand, a Czarist. He led a plot to blow up the ship to prevent it from going to St. Petersburg to join the fleet. The daughter discovered the plot; the sailors, already organized in a naval soviet, threw the officer overboard, and the battleship steamed off to St. Petersburg with a nice little romance ready to culminate between the daughter and the chairman of the sailors' soviet. (Well, could our American movies do worse?) It looked to me as though it might have been borrowed from "Potemkin"—borrowed and diluted. But the stage sets were original—the scenes being looked at through windows in the house or portholes of the battleship, so that they had the effect of little pictures. Again, the floors and furniture were poised at a slanting angle, toward the audience, in order to give what was deemed to be the right perspective. But as art?—

It is difficult, nonetheless, to define the fundamental differences between Left, Right, and Middle in the theater at present, because there is such a difference of opinion as to technique. I met Meierhold, who really leads the Left stage group. He proved to be an earnest and rather intense man, dwelling as I have said, in a large and handsome house assigned to him and his artistic, technical and financial staffs some time after the Revolution. The policy of his theater (Meierhold Theater) as claimed by him, is to give active assistance to cultural progress in Soviet Russia. But cultural progress to him is Communist cultural progress and none other. He is the official theatrical spokesman of

the present Communist régime. His own statements indicate as much. Yet he also claims to represent art as such.

The outstanding feature of the methods employed by his theater consists in emphasizing the social element in the dramatic events of a play. This is entirely opposed to the tendencies of those theaters which seek only the outward esthetical form while paying no attention to the contents of the play. It also parts company with those who entirely ignore the thoughtful treatment of the outward form of the production, thereby reducing its cultural value. Personally I decided that Meierhold gets a "kick" out of revising the old Russian classics and shocking the old theater and its followers. For instance, he rearranged "The Forest," by Ostrovsky, into thirty-three episodes, laying stress upon the slave-driving nature of the Russian landlord in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Another old play, "The Magnanimous Unicorn," (?) he rationalized or perhaps I had better say communized to such an extent as to dress the actors in working garb and equip the stage with a wooden structure in the shape of a water mill, the same constituting a combination of platforms, ladders, chutes, and revolving wheels. Well, now, just how important or valuable or progressive or ideologic, as you will, is all that? To me it seemed little more than a mad effort to do something different—shock or amaze the stage-weary.

Also I saw his production of Gogol's "Revizor" done in a radically different way from the classic presentation of the Art Theater. Whole new scenes were added, the text changed, and a mysticism and symbolism injected, all of which he claimed were according to the original manuscript and spirit of Gogol. But the sets, to me at least, were not satisfactory. They were miniature and rolled on to the great bare stage on wheels, all ready for action. And

although the acting was very good, I was not impressed by the staging.

In the LEFT group, in Moscow at least, is only one other theater—Proletcult (Proletarian Culture), which adheres to the new forms entirely. The others—the Theater of the Revolution, for instance—produce plays only revolutionary in content and not in technique, as do also the Trade Union Theater and The Mali. But a number of studios of the Stanislavsky Art Theater, which primarily follow the theories of Stanislavsky, which are not radical, adhere more to the older and more accepted forms—even the classics. In one of these, a studio on The Arbat, I saw “Virineya,” a Russian rustic play of the Revolution. It was good but too long. These particular theaters, as I understand it, steer always a middle course.

At the Kamernei (Chamber Theater), which is really not radical and of no school, yet an independent and fairly interesting venture, I saw several fantastically staged comedies which I did not care for. This theater, under its director, Tairov, conducts a theatrical school of—seventy students who are compelled to learn a mixture of the arts—opera, drama, comedy, pantomime, tragedy. Light and stage settings here play an important rôle and according to Tairov follow special principles, rhythmic, dynamic, plastic, architectural. Well, maybe. There is no naturalism and so, according to this director, the player can, to the maximum, show his art. The settings, according to Tairov, must serve the actor and be as an instrument for the actor to play on. In answer to my inquiry as to his possible treatment of “Macbeth,” he answered that he would make a large space for the actors and use but little scenery, one level for the living characters and another for fantasies of the play. The Kamernei, as he also told me, makes a specialty of foreign plays, selecting them accord-

ing to scenic composition, dynamic possibilities, new architecture, and present-day problems and spirit.

As you may guess from what has been said here, exceptional modern Russian plays are scarce but the Soviet drama is still young. In Tairov's opinion, the most vital plays to-day are produced by, first, America; second, England; and third, but only quite recently, France. But that is not saying much for Communist Russia, is it?

In short, as I say, for all this palaver concerning newness, progress, difference, I could not but feel that all these several ventures were rather behind than ahead of our own more progressive producers and stage technicians—really quite far behind in some respects—although no present-day radical Russian will agree with that. On the contrary, we, and Europe, have everything to learn from them.



CHAPTER XV

BOLSHEVIK ART, LITERATURE AND MUSIC (B)

BUT the matter of the arts in Russia at this time is far more complicated than anything thus far indicated. For apart from the stage—its plays and their presentation and interpretation—the discussion at once passes to literature—the whole question of Communistic as opposed to capitalistic or Mammon art or letters—and once that point is reached, the fat is in the fire. For what truly is Communistic as opposed to Mammonistic or capitalistic art, or vice versa? And what, if any, relation has either or any of these to art?

For apart from the subject matter of any book or picture or play—which obviously and readily might partake of Communistic or religious or moral or capitalistic data and hence the flavor of the same—how would the treatment or presentation of the same, which is wherein the art lies, be affected thereby? A religious picture or book or play may well be great art or not. It depends on the artist not the subject matter or any theory of treatment; similarly a Communistic or capitalistic or philosophic tale of any conceivable kind or description may well be art or trash. Art is

neither in the subject matter nor the principles advocated, if you please, but in the personal or individual presentation of the same—the very essence of the artist about the business of such presentation and has little or nothing to do with any theory of life or government or conduct. If not, why the value of “The Decameron,” or “Droll Stories,” or The Book of Job, or the Song of Songs, or “Mr. Bad Man,” or that marvel of marvels, and certainly the antithesis of anything that a Communistic state would applaud—“Candide.” For does not that devastate any conceivable working theory of life? And does not Communism know that its working theory of government is the only sane and true one? Hence its literature, if any, and its art, if any, must reflect that. But what about the rest of non-Communistic life? The pagan artists of the Renaissance glorified Christianity but with, in many cases, their tongues in their cheeks and were artists first and last. The emancipated pagans of the age of Pericles glorified the gods and heroes in whom they no longer believed. To-day Communistic art must glorify only Communistic theories and nothing more? But where are *their Tongues*?

And so, I fear me much for the future of the alleged literature and art of the Communistic world now holding in Russia. Yet it is much looked for and talked of. Not only Trotzky but Lenin himself set forth the thought that what was needed in Russia and what would come in the course of time would be a literature as well as a world of painting which would not only be inspired by the principles as well as the achievements of Communism but in their turn would be the spirit and so the art achievement of Communism—a literature and a painting unlike any that had gone or been before. Well, maybe. But if it is art it will be so not because of Communism but of the *artist* bred by chance in that milieu as artists have been

bred in Italy, Holland, Arabia and elsewhere. For myself, I am inclined to think and so agree with the distinguished Stanislavsky of the Moscow Art Theater, who said to me: "The white line of art is eternal and passing conditions cannot fundamentally change it." It concerns, as I see it, the beauty as well as the tragedy and the comedy of the state of man amid this changing and passing scene—and this neither Communism, nor Capitalism, nor Democracy, nor Tyranny may alter much—no, not Religion, nor Agnosticism, nor yet Paganism, nor Pessimism. Life is and does; those who as a part of it struggle and suffer or succeed and rejoice, pass just the same the while theories like clouds float overhead and either lower and darken or dissolve and disappear before the glare of a greater wisdom or method whose source remains as mysterious as the chemistry and physics by reason of which we all, and so strangely, achieve our being and our day here.

And with much this thought in mind I once went to the Moscow Art Theater to meet Stanislavsky. I found a tall, magnificent-looking old man, with white hair, brilliant dark eyes, and in general a face striking for its large, strong features. I am told he is eighty, but he looked and acted a man of sixty-five.

His secretary spoke some English. My first inquiry was in regard to the conditions of his work under the new order, and I found that he was not any too inspired by them, although without sharp complaint. Among other things he stated that of course it had not been easy to adjust himself or his people or followers to the new order; there had been difficult days; but now seemingly and already they were entering on easier times. At first, because of suspected capitalistic or bourgeois leanings, all rights, privileges, means, and especially art privileges, had been taken away from him, only later, in a quieter hour, I

suppose to be in part returned. Since then, nonetheless, freedom to do original work has been slow in coming, he said. But the white line of art, being, as he sees it, eternal passing conditions cannot eventually fundamentally affect it. "There are and have been deviations here, especially as to surface forms," he said, referring to the Lefts and Rights, of course, "but slowly art is once more becoming itself—a lovely reflection of life. Yet from the revolution we must take the good and use it."

"Do you really believe that Communism has as yet produced any really good plays?" I asked him.

"No. But as chronicles 'The Days of the Turbines' and 'The Armored Train' produced by our theater are good, and a new play in preparation in our theater here, by Leonov, is really of the best. How soon I shall be able to do it I cannot say." And then he added: "The stage and its art will play, and is already playing a big rôle politically and educationally in Russia. In every factory there is a theater; in every workers' club a theatrical circle. All Russia now plays."

He also said to me that he did not feel that the old plays of Shakespeare could be done according to the present radical manner. They were not only injured but belittled. "True," he said, "I do not say that the new youth of Russia does not see Shakespeare through other eyes. And they should produce as they feel. But to tamper with Shakespeare, do the plays over as they are now doing here, is to manifest a complete lack of understanding of creative art. For art is a living, integrated thing. A person cannot cut off his hand and put in its place his foot. Nonetheless, we may and probably will profit by this radical experimentation. The worst condition for art is when there is no experimentation of any kind, radical or otherwise. Then art stands still."

Decorations and settings—and regardless of the Lefts and Rights—he considered important only as a background for the actor's art. This, he insisted, was the dictum of inner as opposed to surface art.

After this conversation I went to look at the museum of his Art Theater which was below its immense lobby. Here I found a valuable collection of manuscripts of famous plays as well as old and interesting portraits and photographs of celebrities of other times as well as costumes, miniature stage settings, props, etc.

At another time I saw a Russian ballet at the Bolshoi (Grand Opera) in Moscow, "Esmeralda," adapted from Hugo's "Hunchback of Notre Dame," with music by some Russian composer whose name I have forgotten. The pantomimic interpretation and dancing were beautiful, but the music not so good. Geltse, the leading ballerina, said to be fifty-eight years old, was as young-looking and as active and graceful as any girl of twenty.

Again in Leningrad, I visited the State Circus and the Theater for Young Spectators, the latter one of those propagandist, ideologic theaters intended to effect a change of social psychology in the minds of the Russian young. The entryway the night I arrived there was buzzing with boys and girls ranging in age from eight to fourteen. The play of the evening was Schiller's "The Robbers," which the Director, Alexander Brenzev, had revised somewhat by prefacing each act with a prologue which connected the play with Schiller's life. The theater was exceedingly well built—broad seats in a semicircle like an amphitheater so that no spectator was far from the stage. I liked the stage sets very much. The scenes were changed quickly by shifting a row of long, silver-tinted pillars swung on ropes into different positions and by slightly altering some properties. Judging from the deafening

applause, laughter, sighs and tears of the "young spectators," they enjoyed the play immensely. Before the play and during the intermissions forms were given the children to fill out with their opinions of the play, and from these (things they did or did not like) as well as current newspaper and art criticism, the directors hoped to formulate a policy for the future.

But to return to the activities of the present-day Russian literary and art scene, leaving it to others to decide finally how and when Communistic art is to come into being. After Tolstoi, Turgeniev, Chekov, Dostoievsky, Gogol—in short, the whole glittering glory of Russia's literary golden age—the notions of the present-day Communistic group seemed thin indeed. Surely I said more than once the ills and the tragedies of Russia up to this hour have been sufficient to point to a most casual and indifferent, if not exactly malign, nature hovering about it and man. And is Communism to cure all his ills? Never believe it. Yet in so far as I could see the writers, playwrights, poets, critics of this present-day have a very different thought. Tretyakov, for one, was satisfied that life was malign or difficult enough, but still Communism should and would help and was therefore to be glorified. "But forever?" I asked. "Well, at any rate it is important now." In connection with this we exchanged a few philosophic slaps, even wallops at times, but always in the best of humor and between drinks. He proved to be a strong fellow of the LEFT group, and from his Communistic comments I gathered that he was opposed to any literary forms—novels, plays, poems even—which did not have for their purpose some uplifting and hence useful meaning! Finding him living in a very practical-looking and decidedly non-ornamented apartment house I discovered that his views as to architecture were of a like character. *Use.*

Bare and even colorless utility. A sort of box form, not unlike the homely Lenin Institute in the Soviet Square or the new Izvestia Buildings, with long casement windows, straight lines, and interiorly undecorated, the outside painted a somber gray. Inside the entrance of his particular apartment building, however, I noticed a vivid blue on the walls and wondered if this had only a *use* purpose or what.

Much the same was true of Mayakovski, a then very much talked of poet, large, blond, dynamic, who looked like a prize fighter and dressed like an actor. He was all for the machine age, and as soon as possible, on the ground that it would liberate Russian energies—mental energies—to better things. (Well, maybe. We have the machine age here, but I fail to see the mental liberation as yet.) Unlike some, however, he was not the least bit afraid that his individuality would be submerged by the lockstepping Communistic program. On the contrary, in spite of Marx and Trotzky, and although he is a Communist, he seemed to think that individuality was to endure, Communism or no Communism. But how exactly was what I could not bring him to say.

Again there was one Brikk, a literary critic, and his charming wife, Lilichka, a fair woman no longer so very young, and with that tired look about skin and eyes which is rather common among Russian intellectuals. She had the broad, white brow which is the charm of so many Russian women; clear, sensitive, comprehending eyes, and a dazzling smile. At a tea table she shone and proved a center for both Lefts and AARRs in Moscow.

Of this Left or Utilitarian group was also Leonov, author of "Storm" and "The Peasants of Wori" and "The Thief"—a youth in his twenties. And Carmen, Klebinkov, Brusov, and Pilnyak, novelists or poets all, whose distin-

guishing qualities I could only guess vaguely from hearsay, but of whose Left principles I was repeatedly assured. Nevertheless, I heard of no novels, poems, plays, or even essays, of any transcendent merit, and was assured by more than one conservative and trustworthy critic or reader that since the Revolution, and regardless of the inspiring import of Communism, there had been nothing that equaled, let alone transcended, any of the magnificent things achieved under tyranny and, what is still worse to the Communist mind, Czaristic capitalism.

In the matter of painting, sculpture and music, there are no differing results to report. It is true that in connection with all, one notes a great activity. Not only in Moscow and Leningrad but in every Russian city of any size I was shown exhibits of paintings, etchings, sculpture and what not by young students of the new and presumably encouraged Communistic world—students and arrived painters who should, if there is any essential or spiritual remolding meaning or force to Communism, have shown the effects of the same—some such remarkable effects, let us say, as sprang from the curious and to this day quite inexplicable futurist revolt in the France of some thirty years ago. But no. In Kharkov, Kiev, Rostov, Tiflis, Odessa, as well as in Moscow and Leningrad and other cities, I looked but found nothing which indicated any break with the pre-revolutionary traditions of European art.

On the contrary, quite all that I saw, apart, of course, from here and there a revolutionary subject, failed to indicate any technical let alone any spiritual break with what was. Landscapes, but no better than those of a hundred distinguished European and American painters of our day; and genre as well as portraits and sculpture of this and that person or subject but without any distinguishing

anything in any of them which could be charged particularly, let alone essentially, to the great Communistic upheaval. And yet much talk everywhere of Left and Right, and of art being necessarily practical or useful. To be sure, I may not have seen all. Yet had I found one Einstein, one single equivalent of either Van Gogh, Matisse or Gauguin, how noisily would I now report the same, sure that out of this great social or economic change had come at least that much. But as yet, or I have been most sadly lax or dull, nothing of a novel or stirring import to this outer world of benighted capitalism of which I am still, I lament, a somewhat troubled part.

And so again with music. As in the case of painting, one notes a great activity among the musical circles of the workers' clubs. Symphony orchestras, choral ensembles, and instrumental groups are creating a demand for good music which is spreading to the peasants and soldiers of the Red Army. But as for a Rimsky-Korsakov or a Tchaikovsky as yet—well, not quite. Too soon, one may say, and truly enough considering the past. Yet as I understand it, or was told, before the Revolution music schools and conservatories existed but only for the privileged of a few selected circles of society. Indeed, as the Communists now see it, music before the Revolution was the wretched servant of the nobility and intellectual class groups. But now and as opposed to all that, a special section of the People's Commissariat for Education has organized concert troupes and orchestras which are scattered all over the enormous territory of the Soviet Union. A Beethoven Festival was held recently in Leningrad, Odessa, Tiflis and other large cities, and Leningrad and Odessa have their own symphony orchestras. The Government also professes to be favorable to the efforts of the various nationalities to create their own national schools. But what the nature of

these new musical creations is to be—whether in line with Communistic thought, spiritually affected by the great principle as it were, remains to be seen.

There remains then only the Russian kino or moving picture, in connection with which I found I am puzzled to report the most vital and at times, as it seemed to me, the most artistic as well as the most utilitarian results. For here, if anywhere, the Soviet dictators of Moscow are heartily in accord with those who would inject into all phases of art—the moving picture in particular—a purely utilitarian or Communistic purpose. For is it not, they ask, the greatest of all mediums not only for education but for propaganda? Certainly. With that thought in view then, they are busy at this very moment not only in enlarging enormously every existing moving picture plant in Russia but building others, and large ones, where hitherto none existed. And the type of pictures urged upon the directors of all the kinos by the authorities of Moscow are principally such, or so I heard, as will awaken the minds of the hitherto downtrodden Russians as to the import and value of all Communistic principles and in addition set over against the evils of the old Czaristic régime the unmodified blessings of the new Communistic one.

Well, we have seen some of them here in America. "Potemkin," "Czar Ivan the Terrible," "The Power of Darkness," "The End of St. Petersburg." And as I see it at least the verdict can scarcely be less than favorable (in my humble opinion most of them far superior to our American or Hollywood product). Yet in Russia—in Moscow and elsewhere—I saw still others, notably "Storm" and "The Women of Riojansky." The first of these was a story of the civil wars in the south of Russia, and the second a gem of village life, with the best cinema photography I have ever seen. In fact, both appealed to me as among the best

so far achieved by the motion picture adventures anywhere.

The Leningrad Sovkino I found to be the largest of all the Soviet moving picture studios and in control of or directing the showings in eight hundred different movie theaters in that Gubernia or province. Its studios covered about seven acres, small in comparison with Hollywood plants but rather large in results. Its main building before the Revolution had been a great amusement palace, with a skating rink and other attractions. Now said rink is the main stage studio, and here forty scenes can be taken at once. While I was there they were getting ready to do great things, they said, and already one got a sense of how seriously they were taking themselves and their future. Large salaries were not, of course, nor palatial homes for directors or movie kings and queens. The chief director—a Jew named Greenfield—received but 300 roubles a month; the highest paid star 500 roubles a week. (Two hundred and fifty dollars. O Hollywood.) But in spite of this, there were cars, office boys, subservient sub-assistants, and a great show and clatter of direction.

Here in Leningrad I talked with Herr Direktor Greenfield concerning the nature of his artistic aspirations but found him conservative and not inclined to talk—only to show. On the other hand, in Moscow in Sergé Eisenstein, director of the Sovkino there and author and director of "Potemkin," I found a most communicative and more communistically convinced person than any among such directors as I had met. He was Bolshevik, young, barely twenty-nine, and handsome—a little short and stout, but with a fair, boyish face and blue eyes, and a mass of thick, curly hair. His room, one of a flat of six rooms occupied Moscow style by six families, was very small for New York or a leading moving picture director but spacious for Moscow. To make it more habitable or presentable, he

himself had decorated the walls with a series of fantastic bull's-eye convolutions in color. And above his desk, and for purposes of ornamentation, I suppose, was an American placard advertising a new cream separator. Elsewhere on his walls were photos of Russian kino celebrities.

On entering, I remarked that he had the largest and most comfortable looking bed I had seen in Russia, and I envied him the same, I having thus far seen only narrow and most uncomfortable looking ones. He smiled and said he had bought this magnificent thing from an American farming commune near Moscow where he had been taking pictures.

Interested in the import of the moving picture to Russia I began with a question about the general organization of the movie industry there. He replied that it was purely a Government enterprise and as such came under the Department of Education (Lunacharsky), with, however, a separate educational branch and manager. There was, as in America, strict control, but here it was political whereas in the United States it was moral. He also stated that in his opinion there had been only three or four great pictures produced during the past three years in Russia and cited as one "Potemkin" (his own) as well as "Podovkina, Mother," a story out of Gorki and some other thing I have never seen. "Potemkin," as well as other pictures contemplated by him, are, he said, all naturalistic as opposed to the western type, by which he meant those which imitate the American product in all its ramifications and as opposed to the out-and-out chronicles of some life or movement. (His own, by the way, are not much more than that.) Of course, he added, there were other directors who under Government direction devoted themselves to educational or scientific pictures which were intended for Russian educational and scientific purposes only.

But as to the art of these things—his own large pictures in particular—his theory was that what is best and greatest in the movies is, first, no plot, no dramatic stories, but pictures which are more nearly poems; and second, no professional actors but rather people direct from the streets or places where the pictures are to be taken. Such pictures are best, he said, and where well done approximate great art. In connection with his own pictures, as he was careful to explain, this method is entirely possible because at no time in connection with his work does he plan extensive or dramatic scenes but rather chooses to portray the ordinary daily life of the world about him, its natural drama. For instance, a new picture by him but then not yet shown, "The General Line," was, as he saw it, a narrative illustration of how a poor village may be developed through co-operation. And that he considered great art.

Interested by this idea I later went to a private showing of "The General Line." It consisted of a series of realistic village scenes—a peasant religious procession, for instance, taken from life; a model Government dairy; an incident showing a poor peasant woman coming to a rich peasant for the loan of a horse to help harvest a crop; and so on. The rich peasant and his wife were literally rolling in fat, and so too their livestock, and their luxury, in its primitiveness, reminded one of the feudal barons. Following each appearance of the fat wife on the screen, there was shown a wax figure of a pig, whirling coquettishly. The resemblance to the woman was at once remarkable and comical. The picture, as he insisted, possessed genuine values—as sincere interpretations of life anywhere are quite likely to possess. But as to classic greatness—well—

I also saw his "October," shown later in New York as "The End of St. Petersburg." Its value I need not emphasize here.

But in regard to less utilitarian works he seemed to me most naïve. For instance, he considered "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" a clear illustration of a wrong method in moving pictures; a form of expressionism not worthy of the kino. Whereupon I stated that he was another propagator of the Soviet system and asked him what he would do with his ideas in South Africa. He replied that he would adapt them to suit local conditions, problems; perhaps concentrate on the Colonial question. In America he would try to do only liberalizing things; deal, say, with the Negro question. An "uplifter," said I.

About the cost of production—"October" cost 500,000 roubles. Yet Eisenstein received but 600 roubles for his scenario. "The General Line" cost about 75,000 roubles to produce. The heroine received a salary of 150 roubles, 75 dollars (Hollywood please copy), a month. On the contrary, an old artist of the Art Theater, one Leonidov, an actor of fame, received 100 roubles a day. Can you not imagine his purely aristocratic and highly non-Communitic mood?

As for myself, I said to Eisenstein that I still considered the drama of the individual to come first—his personal trials, terrors, and delights—since only through the individual could the mass and its dreams be sensed and interpreted. But with this he would not agree.

Speaking generally, I would say that the Communistic upheaval in Russia has done little more as yet than to confuse the aims as well as the issues of the various workers in the various fields of art. The Government has a political theory to establish and blindly, although practically enough, seeks to subsidize if not actually to force and so to betray if not enslave the arts to its service. Yet as we have seen, and because of the innate substance as well as the insubordination of art, without any really disturbing or

valuable results so far. Excellent pictures, books, plays, and moving pictures of a propagandistic or utilitarian flavor do abound. But as for anything more than that—no—not as yet.

And yet apart from this propagandistic determination in connection with the art workers and dreamers of this present day, the Government maintains all sorts of museums housing the manuscripts and mementos of their great, and certainly by no means propagandistic or utilitarian, writers—poets, painters, sculptors, etc., which to me appear to be a contradiction—an anomaly, really. For this would look as though Communism has no desire to efface the older art values, however much it may crave subservient newer ones. There is, for instance, in Leningrad a Gogol as well as a Chekov Museum, and in Moscow a Tolstoi Museum. This last contains an enormous collection of photographs of Tolstoi and his family, busts and statues, editions of his work, relics, illustrations, a death mask, and a large painting of him, already an old man, sitting on the rocks contemplating the Black Sea. "Nothing left!" was a title I proposed for it.

Elsewhere, in all parts of Russia, in every city and town of any size one finds museums and galleries, relics of either the former Government's special foundations or of the wealth and taste of its former bourgeois adherents, capitalists and financiers, which, nonetheless and in the face of the present Government's contempt for capitalistic or Mammon art are most carefully housed and preserved, a Museum Department having been created for this purpose. But why? The only possible intellectual effect of all this display on the rising generation of Communistic children must be to set forth all the complained differences not to say enticements of an older and non-Communistic social order—most fully and effectively set forth in various ways

—its personal orders and distinctions as well as its luxuries, vices, gauds, fripperies, and what not else. Yet, to the Communist mind apparently, sanctified by art, and hence not to be destroyed. Nonetheless no encouragement for any living artist of that older day or now, unless by reason of utilitarian convictions or otherwise he finds himself in a position to sanction the present theorists and their dreams and practices.

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P.S. In connection with this discussion of art in Russia—its present state and aims—I shall always recall a visit to Tolstoi's former home at Yasnaya Polyana, an estate of some seventy-five or eighty acres about one hundred and fifty versts from Moscow and now maintained by the Government as a memorial. It was very cold when I left Moscow—solid Russian winter weather—and when I arrived everything was covered with snow. All about Yasnaya Polyana, the name meaning "a clearing in the woods," were pine and birch trees. The temperature was ten below zero. As we reached the old house in a rattle-trap sleigh which I secured at the nearest station—no money for invited guests in these days—an old, watery-eyed caretaker opened the door of the two-story white house and showed us certain rooms left just as Tolstoi had lived in them. At this time they were unheated and of a dreary aspect, all the plainness and ugliness of an ordinary American farmhouse. A large combined living and dining room, with a long table and grand piano, family portraits by Rapine on the walls, and a stuffy little study adjoining his bedroom, constituted the main portion of the second floor. Tolstoi's bedroom, by the way, was furnished with a simple, narrow bed, an old washstand, and on one wall of the room still hung his shabby old dressing

gown—a mere rag. How frugally he must finally have lived!

On the other hand, the present living quarters of the house, occupied by his daughter Olga and his niece—the first a superintendent of a new Russian rural school now fostered by the Communists; the second a teacher of music in that school—presented a more cheerful appearance. At least it was warm and usefully furnished. Tolstoi's niece, an elderly woman who spoke a little English, received us most kindly and gave us tea and bread and cheese. Through the Revolution, as she told me, she had lost all her wealth, and not only that but was clapped into prison for two months but for no particular reason save that she had some money and was therefore bourgeois—or a blood-sucker. And from this she only emerged after they decided that she was harmless. Then with but one dress—a rag—and no money she sought work and finally found it. Yet she seemed philosophical enough about the new order, and not only that but wished it well. I gathered that she felt that Communism would succeed in Russia. She told me that she was content to be permitted to live in one room of the old Tolstoi house for the rest of her life, although she would like to visit America. She also added that Tolstoi's youngest daughter, Olga, my hostess, had proved most kind to her.

Since it happened to be the seventeenth anniversary of Tolstoi's death I was asked to join in the procession to the grave, where memorial services were to be conducted. I found the novelist poetically resting beneath a grove of birch and pine trees, tall and covered with snow, but, and according to his wish, with no tombstone. For the day some pine fronds had been piled over him. Also and previous to our arrival the children from the nearby Tolstoi school, had gathered about the grave and decorated it with

autumn flowers. The large company, almost two hundred peasants from a village, walked in single file. Then as these elders arrived the children sang beautifully (those warm Russian voices of theirs!) the old Russian dirge: "Eternal Remembrance." (Vechnaya Pamyat.) One Milukov, a Communist friend of Tolstoi's, then spoke, emphasizing the importance of Tolstoi's social and humanitarian theories. After him Tolstoi's daughter Olga spoke of him as her father, and then a quaint little peasant, with a shaggy beard and kindly, smiling face recited thoughts inspired in him by Tolstoi's life and works. There followed a dinner at the Tolstoi residence, after which in the evening all the guests assembled in the living room to hear records of Tolstoi's voice in English, German, French, and Russian. His English and German as I noted were quite clear and effective. After this again, his niece played his favorite pieces, Tchaikovsky's Symphony "Pathétique" and Chopin's "Funeral March." Then a local choir composed of peasant children sang still another song dedicated to him—and in those same moving, colorful tones. Still later, a prominent visiting Russian woman scientist and former friend of Tolstoi's read extracts from biographies and reminiscences of his life at Yasnaya Polyana, among them one from Stanislavsky's memoirs of Tolstoi as a playwright and a man interested in the art of the stage. She also read an unpublished story by Tolstoi about his little nieces, of whom the pianist had been one—and the old family life in this very place. The program was finally concluded by the ragged Tolstoian peasant, who had learned to read and write only some seven years before, who now came forward and shyly recited a poem of his own concerning Tolstoi. I was told it was excellent. He was the Communist school janitor at the time. His coat was very shabby and dirty, a little knapsack was slung

over his back, and he wore huge felt boots, but on his face was a childlike and quite seraphic smile. Some mute, inglorious temperament as yet, maybe.

At midnight I was driven by sled some twenty miles through the icy winds and snows of the region to the city of Tula, where I was able to catch a 2 A.M. train for Moscow.



CHAPTER XVI

THREE MOSCOW RESTAURANTS

THERE are not many places in Moscow—or all Russia for that matter—outside the rooms of a person here and there who chances to have the wit and temperament for food, ease and pleasure—where one can lounge and dine and jest and trade wisdom or nonsense, as you will, with a few people who are not bent on saving the world. Yet I found three. And each one different; the food not bad; the spectacle diverting. One of these (knowing no Russian I recall no names), was a Tolstoian affair—vegetarian—and near the new Moscow post office. And patronized more or less exclusively, I fancy, by those who still see in the quondam Sage of Yasnaya Polyana a true prophet of perhaps the only way of life. According to his teachings, if I recall aright, one was to eschew luxury, or even comfort, eat sparsely of vegetables, think deeply and charitably, and love each and every other from church-bug to Czar. Well, so be it! There may be everything to it. Who am I? But this restaurant:

In Russia to-day, you know, there is not enough furniture to go round—there never has been, I fancy—and

what is present is usually not only poor in quality but sometimes rude, or crude, and worse yet, decayed from a much better state. So that assuming a restaurant at all, it may as well be, and usually is, knocked together from whatsoever scraps of furniture as at the time could be gotten together for the purpose—long, short, square, oblong, and round tables of different woods, colors and dimensions, and usually without linen. And chairs of equally variegated forms and textures. And similarly a rather startling diversity of cheap cutlery and dishes—tin, or paper, or glass, or porcelain. And paper napkins so small and thin that at first I thought they were small and colorless doilies.

But now is the dinner hour, let us say. And, having found a place and saluted such friends as you see, you (almost cafeteria fashion) make a list of the things you desire from a dimly mimeographed menu and carry it to a cashier or order desk, receive numbered checks which you give to one of the several women in waiting. But meanwhile here is the company. And now is the time to study the effect of a philosophy not only upon the diet but the dress, the manners, and the physical features of a male or female disciple. The tall brows; the elongated and waxy Russian faces; the limp and faded and flossy character of some of the beards; the reflective and too often sunken, and not infrequently blazing or burning, eyes; the long, thin, and so often graceful, hands. The limited and too often worn or faded, and almost always, as it seemed to me, inadequate amount of clothing for so icy a world. Positively, on my one and only visit, I sat enrapt. For, true to the tempo of the Russian mind, here you found a group that was seeking to live its intellectual faith—to eat as it thought.

And into the room now comes one Russian—not unlike

St. Francis of Assisi—and wearing what to me was a compilation of shreds and patches, a true Joseph's coat of many colors, but folded gracefully, if inadequately, around a long, thin body. And taking from his head with an easy, graceful gesture, a brown cap so old that it suggested a thousand moths. But the wearer looking about and smiling, now here, now there, and finally seating himself with two others of his ilk and indulging at once in animated and obviously cultivated conversation. The gestures and glances alone were ample testimony. And at last, after a period, having set before him, in one small dish five or six thin, limp scallions, boiled; a boiled potato; and with it a cup of probably sweetened whey. And this, with a piece of black bread, making his meal. And the same lasting for long over an hour, nearly two. Over in a clear corner of the room stood a tall figure eating Kasha (mush) out of a bowl, and walking and talking as he ate, to a few curious or admiring people. He evidently led a scant-clothes cult, either on principle or for economy. He wore a brown linen robe thrown over one shoulder like a toga, short enough to display bare legs above the knees, and sandals. A "charlatan" my companion branded him.

At another table, five young Russians of from twenty to thirty years of age. And obviously here because of that tendency in all humans to go where they can find agreeable companionship—in this instance definitely idealistic companionship. For like so many others in this place, they were physically thin and pining, though at the same time radiant of a certain phase of mental energy—whether sound or not I could not know. But coruscating and gesticulating. Yet in such poor and, as it seemed to me, inadequate clothes. The thin, plain blue or black trousers! The somewhat ancient and not very attractive ties and shoes! And usually a coat and trousers of different and

quite frequently inharmonious colors. And an overcoat none too warm.

But the eyes! And the energy! "Can you make out what they are talking about?" I asked. "They are students, I think, from one of the universities. They are talking just now of some lecture on biology." "And would you say they were Tolstoians, following his social theories?" "I doubt it. This is a good and rather cheap place to eat. They probably believe in vegetarianism, for the time being, anyhow. And they can meet all sorts of intellectuals here. Here comes one now."

And as he said this I turned to the arched entryway that gave in from another room. And if St. John of the Wilderness had appeared, I could not have asked for more. Long, oily, light hair, protruding from a round, fez-shaped fur hat. And from cheeks and chin of a long, egg-shaped face, pale, lymphatic yellow whiskers. And above these, pale watery blue eyes. A long, soiled, and patched, yellowish-brown cloak was buttoned close to his neck and drawn in at the waist by a piece of string, its material looking to be of linen or cotton and decidedly not warm. His feet and legs were encased in boots of felt ascending to the knees. Yet with an air of great serenity he nodded first to this one and then to that, as taking off the patched cloak and the fur cap he seated himself at one of the nondescript tables.

"And who is this, pray?"

"Sarusov, one of Tolstoi's own disciples. He knew Tolstoi here in Moscow. That makes him a man of authority, one of the leaders in the new, or by now you would have to say the old, cult. You know these Tolstoians still dream of turning his teachings into a kind of religion. Simple living, unostentatious dying; love one

another here on earth; hold all things in common. You know, a kind of religious communism."

"But have they any form of organization or ritual?"

"That is just where the trouble lies. They have not. If they had only some material procedure to hang it on, some form of doings in a temple or a field, the thing might go yet. As it is, Communism has rather taken the wind out of his teachings. It is trying to do the same thing on a purely economic basis, without religion or the Christ precept. But still they meet here and there to read and study him. And next fall they are to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of his birth. Then you should come and see. I wouldn't be surprised if hundreds, even thousands, of such dreamers as these turned up here in Moscow. They are a mystical people, these Russians. A fantastic idealist like Tolstoi appeals to them. Dostoevsky in all of his books indicates as much."

I studied the old man, now making his meal of spinach, onions, and some black bread and beer. And thinking what? Still how to save the world in a new way? He was in his element here, surrounded by a large company which if not exactly like him was in his key—mental if not mystical—capable of making him feel at home just as his presence there made them feel at home—a phase of the actual Russia of to-day.

* * *

The second restaurant of which I wish to write was a quaint, pleasing, and yet none too brisk, little place over by the Lubianski Ploschad—wherever that is—and kept, as I was told, by a highly refined Russian, who, in better days, had been the somewhat worthless heir to a considerable estate (taken away from him by the Revolution, of course)—and his since acquired wife. For before the

Revolution he had been an unmarried, social butterfly, knowing no trade or profession. Once the Revolution broke, he probably found himself without either sufficient means or convictions, to escape, so here he was. And the charm of this place was that he, because of his early training, knew what constituted good food—a rather rare thing in current Russia. Also, and not strange to relate, he had a taste for music—the violin, no less, which he would play when the mood was on him, accompanied almost invariably by a young pianist who for his meals came to play with him.

A commonplace little suite of rooms—occupied after the guests were gone by host and wife as their living quarters—comprised the restaurant. A small, sheet iron stove held the center of the main room. And upon window sills, tables and ancient piano, paper flowers—almost the only winter flowers of Russia. They grow few real ones—a luxury, you see. Yet here and there a stubborn and determined rubber plant. And on a chair near the stove a large, fat, yellow, green-eyed Russian cat. And near the cashier's desk—this side the piano and between it and the kitchen door—a table with some magazines and papers, at which mine host, when he was not taking orders or making change, could sit and read.

But what was most pleasing, or perhaps I had better say engaging, of all, was mine host himself, long, lank, blond, debonair, a little casual, and I am sure a little, let us not say lazy, but easy-going. For what is life? And what can one do in Russia these days? Had not his early patrimony been swept away? And did he really believe in Communism, anyhow? Most likely he did not. It might not last. Besides, what could the heir of an extinct bourgeois family expect of such a Government? So, oh, well, here were papers and books. And his wife could cook.

(She appeared to be chained to the kitchen, his devoted slave, apparently.) As for himself he dangled here and there over the tables, an easy, social and intriguing figure—full of grace and good will and a personal self-sufficiency which enveloped him like a cloak. And his manner in taking your order was that of one who was meeting you, not so much for the first time but after a long absence.

But most of all I liked, I think, the way he exchanged sociabilities with those he knew. There was the table and the papers and a book or two. And between whiles—between piano solos by the young student and his own solo or duet contributions, he talked to one and then another coming in or going out. Now what was this rumor of war between Lithuania and Poland? Surely, nothing serious. Yet, maybe. Yes? He hoped not. Russia certainly needed peace for a while now, and if Poland began. . . . (I am quoting the translations of my guide.) And yes, (since a young girl had come in and was pausing near him as he sat at table), he was reading this book—"White Love"—it was not so bad. A story of the Kolchak frontier. But no, he wouldn't advise her to read it. And to my companion on leaving he said he was glad to see him again. It had been weeks since he had been around, or so it seemed. "A charming fellow," added my guide as we went out. "He has just that something that isn't real exactly, but he makes you feel that it is. And that's why I like to come here and bring other people, too."

But the most outstanding thing, and indeed the one thing which to my way of thinking conditioned and distinguished the whole situation was something which had nothing to do with the food or the man's manner but was rather a reflection, I think, of the spirit as well as the economic condition of the Russia of the hour. Also of this man's own attitude toward his own physical and social

state which assuredly was not much. Yet reflected in such an odd or different sort of way. For what I now refer to neither my companion nor any one else in Russia would have commented on at the time—not given it so much as a passing thought, I think, since it was nothing more than a reflection of Russia's courageous determination to make the best of what is in order to create the better or ideal state of to-morrow. But that is just the point. For this was December and very cold, as you may guess. And yet mine host had on a second-hand spring suit of a very light texture and showing much wear, so much so that it had acquired two small patches, one at the knee and one at the left elbow. And these, alas, of cloth which did not match. And, worse and yet more interesting as I feel, when it was his turn to play—(and he was by no means an indifferent violinist)—he would rise and going close to his friend at the piano would take down his violin and lifting it with his left hand hold it to his chin in such a way that the elbow patch, which was of light blue cloth—the nearest to the gray he could find, perhaps—would come into view. And then, crooking his left knee slightly as he swayed here and there, lost in some dream of Grieg, or Brahms, or Chopin, he would bring into view the second patch directly over the left knee and of greenish-brown cloth,—a most outstanding bit, but perhaps the best that could be achieved at the time. And then, the applause bursting, for there were always many in his restaurant, he would bow, his patches somehow holding the eyes—or at least my eyes. And then a customer entering, or one passing out, he would begin again in his easy, social way to talk.

But those patches. And that spirit—the spirit of present-day Russia, really—a most courageous and healthy and powerful one and by the aid of which he and all

present-day Russians, for that matter, wave aside and give the death blow to all slavish and brainless materialism,—its fashions and conventions which so dominate our western world. The flair with which they demonstrate the non-necessity of our lavish material needs; the grace and assurance with which they dismiss them. I swear on seeing this it was like receiving a dash of cold water straight in the face, a kick to one who sleeps hoggishly and brainlessly. "Come now," I said. "What is this I am seeing? Verily, fashion's form, the brainless and pretentious show and waste of mediocrity put to flight. Heigh ho! a real experience, a new thing under the sun." And at once I was pulsating with a new and genuine elation. For believe me or not it was like a flag that is run up on a tall battlement, a signal and a call to a great and good fight, perhaps, the death of something not worth while. It made for me the best and the most fascinating meal and scene that I had eaten or contemplated in all Russia.

* * *

And then the Gypsy Restaurant. I know it has another name but I do not know what it is, or where it is. But since it is a night restaurant of sorts—the only place where a little public night gayety is to be found in all Moscow—it will not be hard for any one who knows Moscow to identify it.

I was taken there by Reswick, the representative of the Associated Press, and we timed ourselves to arrive at midnight, previously taking the trouble to telephone for a table. And knowing the economic and social restrictions of the Soviet Empire at the time, I was more cheered than not, for I had expected little. It is so in Russia. You know that all bourgeois gayety is suspect, and certainly a night restaurant of any description is bourgeois—and so

likely to be patronized by conniving capitalists, concessionaries, money hoarders or grafters who are not in sympathy with the Communistic ideal, and so not entitled to gayety, or indeed relaxation in any form. Yet such is the nature of man, as well as all Russians, that it is difficult to taboo quite everything. The heart of him is unregenerate. And being so, some bits of compromise must be made here and there. Only then, a resort such as this becomes a kind of Communist trap. For it tends to draw these unregenerate, and eke secretly gilded flies, out into the light, where they can be pounced upon by the virtuous and self-sacrificing. Ha! ha! You will hoard money, will you? You will graft or profiteer and then come to such a place as this to make merry! Very good, come to the Cheka! Come to the office of the G.P.U. We will look into your affairs. Perhaps you have not paid all your dues, accounted for all of your takings.

So, as I say, I was not a little pleased to find a quite cheery room, not badly lighted; the food, as it proved, good; the music consisting of ten genuine gypsies of assorted ages and sizes all sitting on a platform, tambours or castanets in hand, and indulging at intervals in various spirited and yet invariably mournful airs, which recited, as I was told, how love, and spring, come early and are soon over—how follow the brief, scorching days of passion and then the sad, brown leaves of autumn and the snows of winter. "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may." And yet, so different is the Russian temperament from ours that it can dine and dance to these airs. And again, so different is the Russian temperament from ours that it finds nothing incongruous in a night restaurant where the music is furnished by ten none-too-attractive and, in certain instances withered and wrinkled gypsies, their ears dangling bangles, their brown, clawy hands thrumming tambours or strings,

their throats chanting wistful and yet defiant tunes of the sorrows that befall us all. Indeed, my friend, who was surely a Russian man of the world, was enthusiastic in his praise, beating time with his hands and stamping with his feet and saying how lovely the old sad airs were—how wistful and tearful and hence wonderful. And all the other diners equally loud in their approval.

"Yet imagine this in New York or Chicago," I thought! "Imagine any night club employing such a world-worn and sinister group as this! Imagine! 'Tis Russia, and none other than Russia."

But I am running ahead of myself. What really interested me at first, and after, were the patrons themselves. Here we were, now in the only public night resort of any consequence, and yet see how it was—low-ceiled and decorated not at all, the furniture of that same mixed and *au contraire* character that marked the Restaurant Tolstoi. And apart from a few men and women in evening dress (how very few, indeed!), an assortment of garments that left me breathless. Upon my word, this is the new, free, different world, this Russia of to-day. For here now comes a strapping young fellow, his plump, pasty-faced girl on his arm, and while she is in flouncy white and wears high-heeled slippers, he is in the standardized dark blue blouse and leather belt, his trousers passing into high polished boots, his oily black hair combed backward in long graceful lines over his ears. And behind him, at another table, with his girl, as dark and curly as an Italian Juliet, a blondish youth in a light summer suit far from new and such as one might wear in July—never in December—yet as swagger as you please on account of it. For mark you, these western suits of whatever vintage, even with an occasional patch, are not to be had in Russia at all. They do not make such cloth—(too luxurious as yet)—and they

cannot afford to import it. The cheaper grades cost plenty here, God knows! And so should a foreigner arrive and sell such a suit or leave it indifferently behind—Presto! a Russian, below the rank of an official, say, in a new and smart outfit! And the wonder of it, English or American! Cut right, and with a distinctive pattern. Ha, ha! And yet, as you say to yourself, the knees bag, and surely the thing doesn't fit as well as it should. But who are you to judge? Are not you the outsider? It is the Russian, the insider, who will be impressed by this. And so . . . no wonder he is applauding loudly, and the girl, too.

But our evening is young. Wait! Here comes a Kal-muk, with an overcoat that I swear has somehow the look of a corset attached to a hoopskirt—(the skeleton frame, I mean), and with a fur hat that has the dimensions of a very, very, very wide and decidedly truncated dish pan. And with him his girl or wife—small, brown, black-eyed, intense, and even a little savage-looking, and in a combination of things half silk, half linen, that are green, yellow, brown, black, purple. You gaze and are impressed. For after all, if this were a stage—the chorus of some colorful show—it could not be so much better.

And then next, a really portly Russian, of perhaps the trader or bloodsucker type—fat, red-cheeked, double-chinned, puffy-necked, a really beastlike type. And with him two attractive and yet semi-obese girls or women of not over twenty-six or seven, with a heavy, meaty sensuality radiating from every pore. The white flabby double chins and crinkled necks. The small and yet fat and even puffy hands. The little, shrewd, greedy eyes, half concealed by fat lids. And yet they too are moved by those gypsy laments, and sing or beat time with their heavily bejeweled fingers. Surely some Cheka agent or G.P.U. will

see these and call our fat friend to an accounting on the morrow. Surely, surely.

But along with these the artist types. And writers. Ho, should they be excluded? And why, pray? The outer door is heard to close and here enters, as brisk and flip-pant as the chill wind he brings with him, Ivan Ivanovitch, say—painter or sculptor or poet, and looking all three. That flaring chrysanthemum hair. The thin, yellow, downy mustaches. The long, waxy, artistic, and yet vital hands. The swagger and even defiant or tolerant air. You think perhaps that he is to be overawed by poverty, or defeated by the gayety of this place. Go to! Heigh, ho! We artists will show you what art and poverty are like, and genius also! And so, an overcoat! (I am not exaggerating. God forgive me, should I!) And so an overcoat (and in this Moscow weather no less), of nothing other than cretonne or its loom sister—a vari-colored and flaring, posterish thing of quite Chinese exuberances, as who should say the more of this, the better. And to top the thing off—yellow gloves. And worn with what an air! Surely in this case it is the manner and not the clothes that make the man. But with his girl on his arm or preceding him, in a trim English walking suit, which has been come by God knows how! Yet not expensive. No, no. A thing that could be picked up in London for twenty shillings, or in New York on Fourteenth Street for nine or ten dollars. But here in Moscow, heigh, ho!

Indeed I might continue this for pages. For Moscow, and all Russia for that matter, is to-day picturesque if poor—all the more so because it is poor. And patches and rags and makeshift and mixtures of the most amazing character are the veriest commonplaces of the hour. Yet as for being deplored—nonsense! Who is rich? Who can be rich? And as for bourgeois, capitalist, fashions, pouf! Also

tush! We will do these things as we wish, devise new ways and means. And so you yourself, fresh from London, or New York, and with all your capitalistic and other class notions still strong upon you are suddenly swept into the newness, the strangeness, the freshness of it all. Heigh ho! Bully for a new day! Bully for a new idea! To hell with fashion plates, with what the west, or the north, or the south, may think! This is Russia. This is the new, shifting, shimmering, changeful, colorful, classless day of a new social order. A new world indeed. A fresh deal. Verily. Selah. And let us hope that no real harm comes to it, lest something fresh and strange and new and of glorious promise pass from the eyes and the minds and the hopes of men.



CHAPTER XVII

SOME RUSSIAN VIGNETTES

I

It is four o'clock of a December afternoon in Moscow—the time appointed for your inspection of a quite new group of apartments for workers—the what-Communism-is-doing-for-the-workers kind. The Russian labor day is eight hours, and, since it often begins at 7:30, ends at 4. You have seen the rooms of perhaps twenty families, all in one group of buildings. They have each a room or two, according to the number of people in the family. Never less than three for one room, ordinarily five or more for two. And furniture which for lack of beauty or taste or real comfort almost defies description.

So poor have been the working classes heretofore that they have never had any furniture worthy of the name, and so have really scarcely created a market for any. And the apartment in which you are invited to dine, and which is occupied by two brothers-in-law and their wives, consists only of two rooms, equipped with two single beds, a baby carriage for a newly arrived baby, a sewing machine, a table two by three feet, and three chairs and a box. A

mixture of propaganda prints, some photographs of Lenin, Marx and Lunacharsky, and lithograph reproductions of old-time bourgeois paintings, ornament the walls.

But no bath. There is a communal bath in the basement of the twelve-apartment building. And no kitchen. You learn—with surprise if it is for the first time—that there is a communal kitchen—one for every six apartments—and that supplies for every single family kitchen are to be found in a closet or cabinet labeled with the owner's name and ranged, along with the others of this community group, in the general kitchen on this floor at the rear.

"But isn't this a hardship on the woman who does the cooking—to be compelled to go outside her apartment and along with five other women share a common kitchen?" I was talking to my Communist guide and secretary, also a guest at the time.

"Be of good cheer. You do not understand the Russian temperament. Far from this being a hardship, it is a social pleasure, one of the daily reliefs from ennui. Here are our two hostesses now. As you see, they are preparing the feast for us. Let's go back with them and see how it is done. It won't annoy them or their neighbors in the least. They will accept us as additional company."

Together we go back into a fairly large general kitchen, occupied by two large wood-burning ranges, six closets and several sinks for washing and drying dishes. And gathered about these, a dozen or more persons—women, children and a few men, young and old. Closest the stoves proper were the mothers, or wives, or daughters, or grandmothers, each busily engaged with the peculiar culinary business before her. With one it was a large water kettle, full and being brought to a boil; with another—with almost all, I might say—the inevitable Russian pot in which some general family stew was being prepared. Here, too, were

potatoes being boiled; there, bleenchiki (pancakes) being fried. In one skillet was a well-known Russian sausage, watched over by a very old man who was at the same time boiling water for his tea.

And the conversation! Although I could understand no word, I was reminded of Dostoievsky's weird and talkative groups. I could sense the intimacies, for although I was a stranger and my presence made a matter of general exposition by my mentor and my two hostesses, still no trace of embarrassment on the part of any one. On the contrary, a very general and, as it seemed to me, gay curiosity. "Oh, an American, and he wishes to learn Russian ways."

"The old man over there," explained my guide, indicating, "says that a Russian kitchen is as good a place as any."

And from the dry look around the old peasant's mouth, I could guess that he had delivered himself of an ironic truth.

"And what are they talking about?" I asked.

"This one," my secretary informed me, indicating a girl who was next a frail old woman, "asked her just now if her son had found work. And she said no. And that stout old dame there insists that there are too many people in here, that the rules really call for only one each from a family. And"—after listening again—"those two are talking of the number of influenza cases here now. And that one is saying the lettuce she bought is of poor quality. It is the usual kitchen gossip, I think."

"And you really mean to say there is no sense of inconvenience or personal dissatisfaction in being compelled to commune in this fashion?"

"On the contrary, I assure you there is something in the Russian peasant, perhaps in all Russians, which makes them rather crave than dislike this. They are innately

social. In here they lend one another dishes and food, trade their sorrows and joys. If you were to live here a year or so, you would see. They like to eat in groups, travel in groups, play, and even sleep, in groups. It is no hardship. It is a pleasure."

The meal that followed illustrated even more of this—neighbors coming in to share the company of the strangers, to offer delicacies from their own tables, to ask us to come again and eat with them. But I am dismissing that, for when all was said and done, the most truly communistic color of the house was the kitchen conclave I have just described.

II

One cannot help contrasting Russian and western equipment, since in Russia they are always talking of what they are going to have, how soon Russia is to be industrialized, and then how every up-to-the-minute device will be at every one's door and elbow. And truly, in the most amazing places—in the heart of Siberia; in Tashkent and Samarkand, capitals of that central Asiatic region east of the Caspian; in Daghestan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and where not else—one comes upon the most modern things side by side with the most ancient. The modern sleeping car, say, and Alexander the Great's own military stronghold in Samarkand; hotels and restaurants with bathtubs and electric lights and the mosques and tombs of the Abbassids, as in Baku and Tashkent—relatives—some of them contemporaries—of Mohammed; autobuses, automobiles, street cars and the tomb of, say, Timur, the mysterious and almost mythical. But perhaps more interesting still—the thing that gave me the most vivid sense of change and yet of changelessness, of time in which everything and nothing happens—was to walk in the Ulitza

Karla Marxa of Samarkand—English: Avenue Karl Marx—and this not more than half a mile from the reputed tomb of Timur the mythical, and there to see, through the green-curtained window of a commonplace store, not one but four Mergenthaler linotypes, side by side against a wall, all electrically lighted and all busily operated by as many Samarkandish union linotypers, who from time to time would bend back in their standardized spring-back linotype seats to consult copy typewritten in the Usbeckistan language. For this was the language of this particular paper—the daily *Serwachan* of no less a place than Samarkand the glorious—population, 1926, 100,000. And the news of the Soviet world as fresh there as anywhere, and called out by street boys on the corners as in New York, London or Paris.

Yet, passing near me, women and girls in white or black shawls, their faces covered. And Russians in blouses and boots and caps. And Persians in gowns and shawls of various colors, as well as modern dress. And Usbecks and Afghans and Tadischas in occasionally peculiar caps and coats or capes which I might better sketch than describe. But arc lights at the street corners, shops with cameras, radios, phonographs, typewriters, and what not other modernity. And automobiles, trucks, busses, street cars, as well as the Russian droshky!

III

It is the city of Rostov—on the Don—sharp and vigorous in late January. A great bell in a church is mumbling deeply. Along the chief business thoroughfare, in the snow, comes a corporal's guard of Russian soldiers, their long coats almost touching the snow, their peaked gray wool caps revealing their pink ears, the latest model of a Russian rifle carried indifferently over their shoulders.

But inclosing triangle wise three commonplace specimens of Russians, poorly clothed—worn leather coats and caps, not too good boots, gloveless hands—but each carrying a bundle under his arm and each wearing a subdued or, better yet, “arrested” expression.

“And now,” I say to my guide and interpreter, “what do you suppose they are being taken up for?”

“I can tell you now, but I will verify it afterward. They are petty traders, operating without a license.”

“What sort of traders?”

“Well, just above here is a bazaar. In it are all sorts of people who, in spite of the coöperatives, hope to make a living selling anything—ties, shoes, keys, caps, antiques, second-hand utensils—anything, everything. But to operate requires a license. And worse, a long session with Russian officials—papers to be made out, clerks to persuade, perhaps two or three days in line. How much cheaper to obtain some small stock from a more successful and licensed trader, and, laying it over your arm, peddle it here and there. But of course, the danger of arrest—say three months in jail for the first offense, six for the second, more for the third. And yet, all over Russia you will see them being marched off in this fashion. It’s the old trading instinct, strong even here under Communism. They are pressed by ambition or poverty, or both, and trying in some way to get a small start.”

And as he asserted, so, all over Russia, I saw him—in Leningrad, Moscow, Odessa, Sebastopol, Baku—being marched off by soldiers, under his arm his pathetic little bundle, his captured and no doubt later confiscated stock, the telltale evidence of his crime.

IV

It is in the Bolshaya Moskauskaya, the largest and most expensive of all the hotels in Moscow—or Russia, for that

matter. There is some very little thing wrong with the bathtub—one of the eight or ten in a hotel of literally hundreds of rooms. It chances to be my private bath. The stopper is too small and the shower leaks hot or cold water continuously, due to an obviously worn leather washer in connection with its lever. Consequently, two little things are needed which in America at least a plumber or any man handy with a pair of pliers or a Stillson wrench could adjust in no time. I ring for the floor servant and by signs indicate the need. He is one of those blond, German-looking waiters so numerous in Russia, and utters a few "*sei chass's*," meaning "immediately"—the most used and also abused word in all Russia. For no Russian ever comes immediately, anywhere.

I partake of my breakfast, then depart for various scenes. At noon, returning, there drips the water—"tink, tink." Once more the bell. Once more assurances. But although an interpreter arrives and reënforces this request in Russian, still by the morrow no change. I finally go to the office myself. There is one man who speaks English.

"I assure you it will be attended to yet to-day," he says. "We have an engineer. He must have been busy with some other things. But to-day, yet."

I depart, and returning at three find a convention in my bathroom. It is not so large a bathroom at that, but in it are crowded eight men—three in overalls and the rest in workingmen's clothes and with overcoats and fur hats on. They are consulting. I exclaim in astonishment, but suddenly reflect that it must be something else, some larger defect of which I know nothing, for the conference goes on, ten, fifteen, finally thirty-five minutes, after which all file solemnly out, two or three nodding as they go. But still "tink, tink." And no stopper. The tub is really of no use to me that night either.

And so the next morning I am angry.

"See here"—an interpreter does this for me, but in English to the English-speaking clerk—"Mr. Dreiser must have a bath. It is three days now. It is only a matter of a new plug and a new washer in the shower, he says. Cannot this be fixed now?"

"One moment, one moment, I will call you back."

In ten minutes the call. "Yes, you see it is this way: The engineer has no plug. Besides, this is the business of the plumbers. You know how strict the union rules are here. But this morning sure they are coming. They said so yesterday."

"Who?"

"The plumbers." These last two remarks are an exchange between myself and my interpreter concerning "Why plumbers? Why not one plumber? What is all this nonsense about plumbing, anyhow? What were those eight plumbers doing in here the other day?"

As to that, no word, for she did not know. But as to plumbers and unions in general, she would like to explain. It is this way. In Russia no one branch of union workers may infringe upon the duties of any other branch. It is the rule, the underlying base of all union government and, in fact, all government in Russia, since the unions control the Government. But will I not wait? She has been assured that all will be adjusted to-day.

And then at 2:00 P.M. another necessary return on my part. I am to find a letter and receive a guest. But in my bathroom now three men, in overalls and with various tools and some lighted candles. They are busy talking. And continue to talk and tinker until 4:00 P.M., at which time they all file out. Union hours. And curious as to all this, I hurry in to see. True enough, a new rubber plug has been attached to the chain and the shower leak

stopped. In fact, I can see where a Stillson wrench has been applied to the joint where the new washer should go. But why three men? And previously to these, eight? Being curious about Russia and all its ways, I even take it up with the management—the one English-speaking clerk. But he himself is at a loss, since he does not understand plumbing.

“But this is a Government hotel, you see,” he attempts to explain. “Such matters as plumbing and engineering and electrical work come under different department heads, I suppose. We only telephone to the commissar concerning trouble of any kind and he notifies the different departments, I suppose. Sometimes it goes slowly. I suppose they have a great deal to do.”

“But it’s not necessary for eight men, or three either, to confer about a job like that, is it?”

“I shouldn’t think so, but I can look into it if you wish.”

“Do, please.”

But he never did. It was never straightened out. I asked him and others. And finally one American wiser than some others volunteered the information that such group visits were merely an expression of the Russian collectivist temperament.

“Believe it or not,” he said, “but that’s the way they are. They like to work in groups. No one individual under this form of government is willing to take the responsibility for anything. They prefer to go together in squads, confer by companies. It is easier, safer. They avoid personal responsibility and sleep better. And the Government, since it, too, is collectivist in mood, does not mind. It really carries out its Communistic notion, gives employment to many, and so long as there is enough to go round, makes everybody more comfortable. You may think I am crazy, but that is so.”

And before I left Russia I had reached the conclusion that he had told me one of the truest and most illuminating things that was to be learned about the Russian system and the national temperament behind it.

V

It is one of those cold Russian days—snow and a damp cold wind. The place is Sebastopol, on the Black Sea, and now—in January—a decidedly colorless and commercially lifeless world. In summer as a resort, I was told, it was more interesting. I pray so. But what arrested me this day was the number of vacant stores, the poor displays in the shop windows, the slow and not very intent gait of the pedestrians. And of a Saturday morning, too.

Looking for that almost non-existent thing—an even tolerable restaurant—I am accosted by six men and two women of varying ages, but seemingly one economic level—a very poor one—each of whom in turn desires to know if I do not wish to rent a room. Being a passenger on a steamer in port but for a few hours, I do not. But not without some preliminary inquiries—always interesting here in Russia at this time.

For instance: "How large is the room?"

"Oh, a large room, fully fifteen feet square; plenty large enough for four people, if you wish."

"But I do not wish. How much for one person?"

"No more than two roubles by the day for one. Ten by the week, if you please."

"But I thought there were no spare rooms to be had in Russia at this time, that the housing situation was bad; not enough room for anybody, really."

"In some cities, yes, but not here. Here trade has decreased, and at this time of year. In summer most of the rooms are rented to summer boarders."

"How is that? I thought each person or family was allowed only so much space—some thirty cubic feet to a person—not enough to rent to another?"

"That is true of most places. Even here in summer at times. Then one must pay a tax. But when I took this my brother was with me." Or: "My son has gone to Odessa."

"No bath, I presume."

"No bath, but a washstand with water."

"And how many other roomers have you?"

"One, but he lives with us. Just myself and wife." Or daughter, or son.

"You have another room, I suppose."

"Yes, we live in the other room."

Needless to say, this conversation varied some with each person. The number of persons in the other single room varied. The cost to me, for mine, was less, never more. But never, by any chance, a bath, and nearly always only a general toilet on the same floor or in the building. But the look and the clothes of those offering the rooms told the rest—a troubled, depleted, not too clean look. Through my interpreter I always made a satisfactory explanation and wished each one luck. But I could not help wondering how long the principal thoroughfare of this once flourishing seaport of 85,000 would wear this dreary and hopeless look. And I could not help carrying away a part of the extreme depression prevailing. And as it proved here, so it was in some other cities included in my single tour—Sinferopol, Odessa, Batoum.

VI

It is one of those brilliant, cold, winter days in Kiev, when the sun shining on the snow heightens and glorifies everything. Positively, at moments in the winter season

in Russia it would seem as though one were experiencing a new kind of season or climate—not winter, not spring, not summer, not autumn, but snow in sunlight, one might call it—spotless snow in diamond light. And coming after a succession of gray days with no sunlight, I cannot convey the feeling in words, I know. But to see a Russian church, with five or six or seven pineapple-shaped domes, all green or brown or blue or gold, and the sun above—and the snow below!

Well, anyhow, we are jogging along in a droshky, a Russian *isvoschik* as wide as a segment of a wall sitting soberly and protectively before us on his little perch between us and the wind and the view. But no matter. What a glorious thing is sunshine in winter in Russia! How it does sharpen things up! By George, this is really a beautiful city—wide streets, pleasing apartment houses, handsome buildings—not a bad city at all. These Russians are certain to come through yet. Wait and see. It is the expansive, liberalizing effect of sunshine on snow, you see.

And then down this wide bright thoroughfare, lined on either side by fairly respectable-looking shops, a sizable procession of sorts. You see it coming. Two or three people in front who look like priests, now that you are straining your eyes. Those queer, flat-topped, round hats, like segments of a stovepipe. And they are carrying what?—censers? Surely not. But there is something gleaming like brass or gold. And behind, a long company on foot. And in the center, borne aloft, on a narrow wagon with a high platform, a—not really; it can't be!—no—no—not a coffin with a—a—not really. No lid on it, even! Good Lord, how gruesome! How depressing!

For now as the procession draws nearer you see truly that your worst suspicions are correct. These are

priests—three of them—the middle one holding an open book from which he is reading or chanting. And behind them, black-coated figures chanting or singing with the priests a most funereal air. It is most depressing—most depressing, sunshine or no sunshine. And that black, gruesome thing on that elevated platform, high above the heads of all so that everybody—the passing public—may see! God! And not in an inclosed deep coffin as is our custom in the west, but in something that can only be described as half a coffin, the other half being carried immediately behind by six black-garbed men! Yes, it is the body of a large, bearded—really an obese—Russian, his bushy black beard sticking out and up, sidewise and down over his chest, and his large feet fully in evidence, toes up. Not a handsome man, either; rather gross and animal-looking. But all done for now, and being borne along in this funereal, eerie, reducing way. And some weeping women and children following on behind.

But, Lord, Lord, why this sort of thing, anyway? Why will they? How can they? That ghastly figure! Those big hands and feet and that beard! What has become of the beautiful sunshine, anyhow?—the glorious day? All gone—the glitter, the thrill, the kick. For all you can think of now is why not a box of sufficient depth, in an enclosed hearse? And reticence? Seclusion? Evasion of this gruesome theme, even though it must be?

But no, this is Russia, and this is the way they do things here. No use kicking. No use being depressed. These Slavs are different, that's all, and you might just as well accommodate yourself to their ways now as later. It's grim. It's morbid. Not a doubt of it. Useless, uncalled for, distressing, almost disgusting. But—oh, well—

And yet, the glorious quality of this day only a little while back. But now—all gone. You will never, never

forget the strangeness of this sight as long as you live. *Never.* Sunshine on snow will recall it!

VII

The Pestel, a Black Sea steamer plying between Batoum and Odessa, has stopped at Novorossiisk—English: New Russia—a city of 35,000. Much freight is to go off, much to come on; also a number of passengers. Always in Russia an amazing mixture of peoples, reminding one most of a fantastic chorus in some fantastic Oriental opera. The headgear! The sheetlike windings of the women. The mixture of furs—cut in what strange ways—on the men. Truly, here are always Arabs, Cossacks, Armenians, Persians, and who not else. You gaze in astonishment at what is being taken off. Rag bags and bundles—bedding, clothing, and some food, maybe. But where to? And why should they be moving west instead of east? Oh, well, why bother? It is Russia and you will never know.

But now from within the forward hold—a most odorous and pestiferous place—where scores of others like those just leaving are still huddled on the floor—no rooms or beds third class—a most disconcerting yelling and moaning; the voice, obviously, of a girl child. What an uproar! And presently, half pulled and half pushed by two thickly clothed and booted sailors, a smeary-faced and ragged girl urchin of, say, nine years, messy-haired, bleary-eyed from weeping, dirty, disheveled and obviously neglected, yet stocky and, after her fashion, pretty. But though unkempt and tortured, yet defiant; a veritable little spit-fire whom you sense at once to be one of those numerous homeless children for whom Russia is always going to do something and never does. Money for poor, starving American miners in Illinois, say, or Sweden. Two million

roubles for striking miners in Wales. Money for propaganda in China, Turkey, Germany, Poland, France, but no money for ragged, cold, homeless babies on the streets or in the vacant cellars.

But what now? What is being done? Always an interpreter to the right and left to inform me. It is a stowaway. Among the bundled and huddled horde at Batoum she came on as one of the children, slyly holding to some Asiatic mother's skirt, very likely. But now that the crowd is thinning—only four more stops till Odessa—they have found her.

As they carry her down the gangplank, screaming always, I ask other questions: "All right, now that they have found her, what are they going to do with her? Just put her off? She's an orphan child, isn't she? Where does she want to go?"

"Wait, I will find out."

Meanwhile the *mêlée* has been transferred to the dock. The little thing is fighting to get to the gangplank and so on again. But regularly one of the large, genial sailors is picking her up and carrying her a little way down the dock; shooing her off, as it were. But always as he releases her she eludes him and runs screaming toward the plank. And now the other sailor repeats the process. Only, like so much of all that one comes upon in Russia, it is all so casual. No real excitement in so far as any one else is concerned, passengers or sailors or officers all going their several ways. Some soldiers conversing indifferently on the dock. Stevedores taking up hay, crates of geese, boxes of canned goods. Altogether quite a brisk industrial scene. But here is the child, still screaming and kicking. And the sailors always heading her off or carrying her away again, her ragged little skirts far above

her waist, her naked legs exposed to the cold. And one sailor carrying her far down the dock to a gate guarded by soldiers.

The interpreter has returned. "It appears she wants to go to Odessa."

"And why? Is there any one there to receive her?"

"No, I asked him that. She just wants to go there."

"She is a little beggar, isn't she?"

"Yes."

"But now that she is put off here, what now?" I grow a little irritable and I cannot tell you how sad.

The interpreter continues: "It seems that no one will take charge of her. The captain says he is not allowed to carry her. The company will not allow him. And the different cities do not want him to bring any more in. The Government does not want them transferred from place to place. They are trying to take them up as fast as they can. The captain is sorry—everybody is—but he says that she can beg as well here as in Odessa—that wherever they are they aren't allowed to starve. You see, she isn't exactly thin."

"But her life, her health, her outlook, her training! What will she be like when she grows up? You mean to say that not even the police—no society of any kind—will take her up and care for her?"

"But this is such a problem in Russia. There are so many of them, and they are being taken up. It is due to the war."

"Oh, the war be damned! The war was ten years ago. And this child is nine, no more. And what about all the money for propaganda that is being spent everywhere but here for these children?"

After that, a sudden, social, political and secretarial

chill, as it were. A somewhat disconcerting type of guest am I indeed. Am I going to end up now by criticizing Communism, the Russian Soviet Government—my host, no less? Why, the very idea! And so no answer. A few sniffs, rather. And when I suggest paying for the four stations to Odessa—say, six roubles—I am informed that that is not the answer. Why Odessa any more than Novorossiisk? The Government must have its way. It will attend to these things after its own fashion in its own good time. And with no advice from gross, material capitalistic minded American smart-alecks and dubs, either. And so, the incident, as it were, closed. And yet, in the distance—outside the gate now—the cries of the child. And the Russian cold. And the Russian mood, not too tortured or disturbed by anything, not even this. But, of course, she will not starve. Some will feed her. She is not thin.



CHAPTER XVIII

RANDOM REFLECTIONS ON RUSSIA

Now that I am closing this book, do permit me to ramble a little. I saw so much. I have really suggested so little of a very, very great thing that is happening in the world.

One thing I learned there in Russia, and that a thing that I scarcely so much as questioned in America, was that it is a mistake to imagine that any true distinction for man is to be derived from material possessions. There is really nothing to that. Man's true distinction is mental—his thoughts and their meaning to the world and true power is something that derives from thought that can and does echo in the minds of all, inspiring all. I know quite well, of course, that thought and brains, especially distinguished ones, are not common, but when they do appear their effect on the mass is astounding and hence to be celebrated and cherished. And there in Russia one senses that so clearly. For beyond thoughts what is there?—the mere seizing and holding for personal use, and as against the needs or service of the many, the bare insignia of thought which is all that material possessions amount to. And that is wolfish. Worse, it is devoid of any important personal,

let alone general, meaning. Life is best, more colorful and spiritual, without it. And that is one thing that I sensed so clearly in Russia.

* * *

Next, as I also discovered, collectivism has its drawbacks! You can't just wave a wand and fix everything! For regardless of Bolshevism, there are certain mental and physical changes which cannot be made overnight, most certainly not by allocating so many square feet per person, regardless of per brain or per odor.

My own observation having led me to note that the handsome palaces and large pre-war apartments tended to be filled by intellectuals, artists, officials, etc., whereas the new and really modern and comfortable workers' quarters (apartments) were crowded with workers, and workers only, I made inquiry of certain farseeing journalists in Moscow. And the word that I gathered was this—that the most recent development shows that, improvement or no improvement, the proletariat is once more drifting into particular neighborhoods (much improved over pre-war conditions, to be sure, but still separate neighborhoods), whereas the intellectuals (no wealth, you see) tend likewise to flock to neighborhoods of their own choice. Also, all propaganda to the contrary, the interiors of the workers' dwellings still display a tenement-like aspect, whereas the intellectuals in the chipped and frayed and bathtub-less palaces which were all that were left to them, have by now set up quaint and charming abodes of one room or less.

"'Tis all in the thinking, you know, and there is neither good nor ill," as saith Zane Grey.

* * *

In Russia, also as I found, one is compelled to meditate on the truth that cleanliness is not a matter of national

law or fiat, or even of prosperity, public or private, but is instead of the very essence of the individual himself. Either he loves and responds to cleanliness, or he does not. If he does, he will make untold sacrifices to keep himself free of disorder and filth; if he does not, no law this side of a bayonet will aid him. And it seems to me that the Russians whom I saw, from the Baltic to the Caspian, are far more indifferent to the first essentials of sanitation than any of the more progressive nations of whom they now claim to be one.

Indeed, it has always been a matter of amazement to me that a nation, 150,000,000 strong, could have come along with modern Europe next door and not by now have developed a disgust for uncleanness. But the fact remains that to this hour in Russia there endures a sluggish fourteenth century indifference to conditions which are easily remediable. The Russian house, yard, street, toilet, hotel, the individual Russian's attitude toward his own personal appearance, are items which convey to the westerner, at least (and particularly to the traveler from America), a sense of something which is neither creditable nor wholesome. Moscow papers please copy.

* * *

More, I rise here to observe that Communists do not always think intelligently concerning Communism. Else why, in connection with the communal house and kitchen in Russia, a general absence of any attempt at communal cooking, or, at least, marketing, dishwashing, etc.? For there will be ten or twelve families in one house, say, and only one communal kitchen to which nonetheless each family sends a maid or a member of the family to do the cooking. But why ten persons all trying to get at one, two, or three stoves during a certain fixed period of time?

Why not, instead, one, two, or three at most, maids or cooks or what you will, but all paid by all the others and doing all the work. Here in America how often have I suggested a coöperative dishwasher or launderer or marketer in the basement of any large apartment house, yet ever without response. But in Russia, why not? Yet apart from the kitchens, no trace. And apart from local quarrels as to time, no real complaint. More than one intellectual, preparing my dinner, or having it prepared, asserted, "Oh, it was not so bad!"

Yet the original Marxian idea was some such thing as I have in mind. Many Utopians in the early post-revolutionary days wrote of this. But are we to believe that this closer community in the matter of service, if not saucepans, is not possible? Can't there be Communism where the human stomach is concerned? The good public restaurant indicates yes; the bad one, no.

* * *

The Russians love nothing more than color. It bursts forth on their churches, their homes (the old Czaristic or "bloodsucker" type), their shrines, droshkies, the collars and ear nets of their horses, and always on their own persons, I hear, when a little warm weather suggests color. So one would expect the same in the new Russian architecture, Communist simplicity to the contrary notwithstanding. But no! Here, with all of the older grand buildings touched with that gold and color so inspiring against the lowering gray skies or snows of Russia, are such gray, hygienic piles as the new Post Office, the new and mighty home of *Izvestia* (the official government newspaper), and Mostorg (Moscow Trading Trust)—all suggesting that in the face of the severe duty of providing

mankind with bread, there is no excuse for fripperies of gilt and color.

Yet why not? Must the general communal welfare of the future be identified with a parsimonious drabness? I trow not. It smacks too much of a self-flagellating, religious zealotry, valuable only to a Trappist monk. Life is not like that. And Communism or no Communism, the world will not eventually be held down to any such grim, material interpretation of life. If Communism will not allow for beauty, and even a little luxury eventually, it will fail.

* * *

And yet another thing. And most important for it concerns the many tribes and races maybe which make up the new Russia. I may best emphasize it I think by here exclaiming: What a mistake the prevailing belief that Asia is effete! What ignorance. What lunacy even. Yet I have been reading something to that effect all my life. Unschooled, mayhap repressed, unequipped, restrained,—but effete never! Never. There live to-day no more vital and arresting, even ominous, peoples in the world!

The celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Red Revolution early in November brought to Moscow people whose appearance made me at times stop dead in my tracks. Georgians! Tall, handsome, dark, waxy-faced, magnificent, like mettled horses, each swinging along in an easy, defiant way, as if conscious of his strength. And Kazaks! Tall and straight and wild-looking, with fierce, black eyes, and wearing long, black, fur coats. Mongolians also! Yellow Gobi Mongolians, examining you as interestedly as you examined them, while selling shoestrings, nuts, or colorful trinkets. And Afghans, too, with long black curls about their ornamented ears, striped shawls about their bodies, their fierce, catlike eyes fairly glowing out

of half-tan half-black faces. Kamchatkans and Nova Zemblans—whose living code still demands that they kill each other in hours of impending illness or disaster—buy a new knife or gun for the purpose and with the community's full consent and then burying the weapon in the grave with the beloved dead and notifying all of the request and of the solemn duty thus performed!

* * *

One of the things that I picked out of Russia was the sense of a Government that is thinking, that intellectually (idealistically) as well as economically is going somewhere. And what a thing that is for a Government to do—think—have a program! Have we? Once I used to think so, to feel that at least theoretically we were going somewhere, seeking consciously for ourselves a higher spiritual or psychologic state out of which might arise more and more wisdom, more and more intellectual curiosity, more and more of the glory of mentation. It may be, of course, that I was entirely wrong in assuming any such generative or mental bent in my people. I sometimes think that I am imagining what never was or ever will be in America. I have even, of late, tended to abandon the thought, for we are so wholly materialistic, so, in the main, utterly puerile, mentally.

But in Russia, how different! God, the swish and tang of actual, serious, generous, non-material, highly spiritual mentation! Think of a group of leaders (men and women)—there are some 167 on the Communist Central Committee, representing every nook and phase of that enormous empire—who are not thinking of just Russia alone as we in America think of America, but of the entire world! You can actually sit down with a man like President Kalinin, the little peasant father of Russia—and perhaps

its kindest and most loving advisor—or Georges Tchichérin, its Foreign Minister; or Stalin, the Secretary of the Communist Central Committee; or Alexei Rykov, President of the All-Union Council of Peoples Commissars; or Nikolai Bukharin, the ostensible head of the Third Internationale and Communism's principal present-day theoretician as well as philosopher; or Lunacharsky, the Commissar of Education, or any one or every one connected with the present Communist control of Russia, and feel that you are not talking to a politician or an official as such, or a gentleman who for one reason or another in connection with his official or political position must talk in a certain way—as is the wearisome and disgusting case in America—but with a man or a woman convinced in his or her own emotions and reason not only of the importance but the actual necessity of all that is done and who speaks with no flavor of a “party” or in behalf of any particular group, financial, political, or social, as in America, England, Germany, France. In short, you find yourself facing a man or woman who is thinking first and immediately of the welfare of the Communist ideal—its import not only to Russia but to all the world, and after that of the immediate mental as well as material necessities of Russia as an exemplar of this ideal.

Astounding to me was this absence of all sense of petty politics, of private interest, or the especial care or welfare of any subsidiary group or clique. Instead, each individual that I talked with impressed me as being wholly concerned with the welfare and practice of clean and flashing principles that concern all men and were intended for the welfare and advancement, the intelligent and social peace, of all the peoples of the earth. They may be mistaken, these Communists, and because of error in the reading of the very chemism of man doomed to political

and intellectual failure. But how distinguished! How clean! How stimulating and refreshing! And how petty by comparison seem so many of our own trashy, scheming, little politicians, with their private interests, their orders from financial or commercial self-seekers above them, their petty lobbying, their ignorant or brazen flaunting of their political badges and collars!

* * *

Still another fact that I harvested in Russia, and which I will never forget is this—that via Communism, or this collective or paternalistic care of everybody—it is possible to remove the dreadful sense of social misery in one direction and another which has so afflicted me in my own life in America and ever since I have been old enough to know what social misery was. The rich districts as opposed to the poor ones in all our great cities and our poorer and smaller towns and villages. The fine houses as opposed to the wretched ones. And the slums, strikes, unemployed. So late as 1907 in America, how common it was to see crowds of men in the poorer sections of our cities, idling about and brooding, or, if they had any money left drinking. The old Bowery in New York, with its hundreds and thousands of “down and outs.” South State and Clark Streets in Chicago, with their shambling, bleary-eyed, hopeless hordes. And then Fifth Avenue, Michigan Avenue, Schenley Drive, a-clank and a-glitter with the trappings and vanities and gauds and follies of those with endless means. The gulf was too wide, the comparisons cruel and unnecessary.

Yet, after a fashion, they endure to this hour, only now greatly reduced, most of the vanity and arrogance extracted, about as one might extract a tooth.

But in Russia how different—the prevailing tone of the

cities and towns something that has never been anywhere before, I assume. For where are the rich? There are none. And where the groveling, feverish poor? Gone also. You cannot walk the streets of any city anywhere in Russia—Odessa, Leningrad, Perm, Baku, Kiev, Novo-Sibirsk—and gather a suggestion of that difference between classes and conditions that so haunted you in your childhood. It is not possible. Do you sense the import of this? It is not even possible! Fine houses, to be sure, and built by men and women who before the war were prideful and arrogant, perhaps as prideful and arrogant as any, and possessed of millions as against a peasant's or worker's nothing. But how now? Where are these people? And who lives in these places? This one is a school; that a hospital; that a public bureau; that a library; that a workers' club; that a sanitarium or rest home, or lying-in hospital, or kindergarten, or manual training or art school for this or that trades union. Not a house, not a place of any pretentiousness anywhere, country or city, that has not been absorbed into the general social welfare, given over to some general as opposed to some private need.

As for the crowds in the streets, they may be tame, if you like. And not very well dressed. And without much money—no doubt, many with very little—but as for actual want, where is that? What has become of that old intense misery of the poor which you could actually feel, as opposed to the show and vanity and luxury of the meaningless rich? It does not exist. You cannot feel want here any more than you can feel luxury, because they are not. Mental differences, of course, because these exist everywhere. And professional or official differences in the sense that one man or woman may occupy a more responsible position than another, and so may be looked upon or up to as

more important, more actually essential at the hour. But as for gauds and fripperies, the underdog, hungry and eying hopelessly the wealth and show of the accidentally or wolfishly strong and savage victors in a brutal class struggle, that is out.

And when, as in America, you think of the sly and the cunning and the inartistic and spiritually dead who all too often possess the means without the capacity for any worthwhile thing—not even honest, competent machine labor—you are inclined to exclaim: “Wrong!” And as to the Communist code: “Right!” For if it has lessened the glitter and the show, it has at any rate taken the heartache and the material tragedies out of millions and millions of lives. And that is something!

* * *

Yet another thing that this Bolshevik régime taught me is that ability must not think too highly of itself. There are many—very many, indeed, in these days—who can do a thing well, and under pressure will do it. Not only that, but if there is no particular one, then the collective effort of ten or twenty will serve almost as well. Also, that the sacredness of private possessions is at once disposed of by abolishing them. Man there in Russia is taught that he can live on little—even the best man—and that he must not flaunt his strength or victories or use them to oppress others. He may use them for the general good or not at all.

Roosevelt was always saying that in America we might have to shackle cunning as we had shackled greed. I never observed that we had shackled greed to any extent. And certainly we have not shackled cunning. But there is much in the thought, and already in Russia they have devised and are now trying to perfect a system by which both can be curbed. To be sure, the greatest stumbling

block of this greatest and newest experiment in government is humanity itself, its immemorial traits of avarice, cruelty, vanity, and what not else. But to this suggestion the philosophers and theoreticians of Communism blandly reply that these very wretched traits, if they are really wretched, can be educated out of the child, and so the race, given time enough. But can they? Decidedly, if they cannot, this Communist experiment will fail. But no Communist in or out of Russia believes or will admit that they cannot be. So granting that, the thing should go on to a great success.

* * *

But never doubt that there are still in Russia both greedy and cunning men, with their various brands of graft and trickery. One exposure in the newspapers at this very time—Tashkent. Another, the Kuzbas mining enterprise. But in spite of that, how these crooks manage to operate in anything short of these gigantic undertakings is more than I can see. For the checks are many, the punishments severe. And in all of the instances of which I heard, they had been exposed and in many cases the offenders shot or sent to prison. Ordinarily, the little man has so little to graft on. No land. No material possessions. No inheritance. Every single avenue of personal acquisitiveness blocked by the dictatorship. One may gather and conceal a little money here and there, perhaps, but if one's expenditures (and for what, pray?) are excessive, or even noticeable, one is betrayed. Really, one's single line of increase or distinction lies in personal intellectual or cultural development and equipment and the use of the same for the welfare of Russia. By such means one may rise to notice, popularity, applause, even national distinction; otherwise, just how I cannot see.

* * *

And yet another and most interesting truth which gradually dawns on you, and thereafter lives with you in a most comforting way, in connection with your life in Russia is this—there is no sly and grafting adulteration of anything which you must buy, because there is no national reason therefor. The Government is a commune. It is not seeking to rob anybody but to serve all. And since, through its component citizens, it is the maker and salesman as well as consumer of everything that is consumed, and desires no profit—only a working budget which shall add gradually to the comfort and happiness of every one—what reason for graft or adulteration? And in your dealings with all the shops and stores you have, as yet at least, no sense of graft or adulteration. For instance, at my hotel in Baku, a new or different tasting kind of honey, thick and dark, was put on the breakfast table. “Well, now this is a queer kind of honey,” I said. “Is it adulterated?”

“Adulterated? What nonsense!” replied one of my guides. “It is the natural honey of this region. You need not fear adulteration. There is no profit here for any one in so doing, only great danger of exposure and punishment. The workers themselves, called upon to prepare an adulterated product, would be the first to report it.”

Similarly, in Leningrad, looking in a tailor’s window at a suit of clothes, made of an obviously inferior grade of cloth, I said to my interpreter: “Now what do you say that is? Cotton or wool or a shoddy mixture?” “Very likely a shoddy mixture or straight cotton,” he replied. “We have wool, but it is very costly, we haven’t the proper machinery as yet for weaving it. But this suit is not offered as wool, if that is what you mean. Every one knows what this cloth is made of. There is no deception.”

As poor as the cloth was, I sighed in relief, and with admiration. For after all, think of living in a land where

you do not need to look sharp, or argue, and then be worsted at that. It was one of those different and refreshing truths which you come upon in Russia, because you are in a land where they are dealing with life in a new way.

* * *

And what a relief to be rid of some other things which I will proceed to mention. Lawyers! They are reduced almost to a minimum in Russia. The small worker (and the one most likely to suffer the greatest harm from their machinations) can get free legal advice, if he needs it, from his local soviet or his trade union counsel.

And again, the quack or robber doctor—so rampant and pestiferous in America at this hour but now quite extinct in Russia, or if existing confined to abortion cases of which the Government does not approve. For the State trains the doctor and supplies free medical treatment, hospital and sanitarium service to all who work. And while as yet there is some criticism of the skill of these people, I was told by individuals actually dealing with them that the standard of medical service is steadily rising, and under present educational plans must gradually become as high as that in any country. Certainly the three physicians whom at different points on my tour I was compelled to consult proved to be men of real intelligence. Two of them spoke German in addition to Russian, and one English. The prescriptions handed me after each diagnosis served as well as any other. At any rate, I got better. And in each instance, I being a guest of the Government was told where to present them in order that they might be filled free of charge. I was warned under no circumstances to offer a fee.

* * *

And next, the "Realtor," and his documents, booms, and grafts. Can you conceive of a land in which he does not function? No Florida or California booms! No local subdivision parades, with music and fireworks! No dated auctions, with orators, salesmen and touts! No summer sales of lots that in winter are under water! No collapses, with people tearing their hair because of their losses! Would you regret this? Would the joy and color of life be lessened if they were no more? Do bunk and robbery really add to your happiness—their absence take from your joy of living? You might think this over, for in Russia they are not, and should Communism arrive in America, they will not be here.

* * *

And lastly, but not leastly, the noisy Advertiser, with his wasteful—if they are really wasteful—page- and half-page ads! his annoying and disfiguring signs; the endless pother and blare and blather concerning the this or that that he has to sell. Dingle's Soup, Buntz's Beans, Father's Bread, Uncle Tom's Bunion Cure, or their equivalents! Would it grieve you to know that in Russia all such things are manufactured and sold by the Government through its own stores and coöperatives at cost, and that therefore no public advertising is necessary? Hence no road signs; no newspaper or magazine advertisements. No blinking fire signs telling you about "Cossack Cigarettes," or Stalin's or Lunacharsky's own preferred soups or shoes or collars!

Yet it may be after all, and this in the face of trickery and bunk and ballyhoo, that there is a genuine measure of pleasure in dicing with fate or your neighbor, taking a loss to-day in order that you may rejoice in a win to-morrow. I am not sure. I have not made up my mind, although

these very serious men and women in Russia have most decidedly made up theirs. And strong and able and determined men and women they are, too.

* * *

Yet ambling about here and there—looking at the true Russians in Moscow, the White Russians of the Ukraine, the Tartar and half Chinese in Siberia, the Usbecks in Usbeckistan, the Arabs, Persians, Turks, and Armenians in the region of the Caspian—I could not help thinking, suppose they are all really wrong? Suppose, as Darwin and his theory insist, a measure of chance and gamble is really right? That man, in order to get even a measure of joy out of this mysterious and inexplicable world, must really dice and gamble and trick and waste and show off or strut before his fellows who now have less but to-morrow may have more? Suppose? For is it not possible that once these very Russians have all a fair measure of property and comfort, they may begin to think back on and crave the good old days when one could knock a man down (in some sly, concealed way, of course) and rob him? Or will they always, because of the new training now being provided prefer to deal fairly and generously or justly with their neighbors? I wonder.

Mr. Stalin, Mr. Bukharin, Mr. Kalinin, and Mr. Tchicherin will tell you yes. Mr. Darwin, Mr. Haeckel, Mr. Spencer, and Mr. Voltaire will tell you no, and that these Russians are fools, dreamers, and that some day they will wake up.

I wonder.

* * *

On the other hand, it is entirely possible that once the Russian temperament has succeeded in equipping itself with life's material necessities and some of its luxuries (those

that we in America already enjoy), it will turn from them with a phase of loathing to the things which I really think matter to it most—phases of mental research and development. For unless I mistake entirely the feel of the land, it is a thinking and perhaps—and that is not so good—a brooding nation. The Russian likes to speculate and dream. You can see it in his eyes. And he will drop any matter in hand, even now in all the hurry and pother of this grand industrialization business that is going forward, as he thinks, with so much speed—to discuss anything he can discuss—art, literature, science, politics, or the ways and doings of his neighbors, and, above all, the mystery and meaning, or meaninglessness, of life. (If anything, I think it is this last that engages him most.) And from his lips, in ordinary conversation, will fall the most colorful proverbs, which could only grow out of speculation and meditation. “The dog barks and the wind carries it farther.” “The old is fat; the new is lean.” “When you wait, you listen.” “No one laughs but another cries.” These are but a few that dropped, like bright coins that clink and shine, from the lips of Russians who were speaking in English to me.

And more, even as they talk of the glorious material prosperity that they dream is to come to them, I never met one who spoke of it in purely personal or selfishly possessive terms. On the contrary, it was always a *general* prosperity that was to be, and in which all were to share, plenty for everybody, everybody happy or free to do this and that. And almost as instantly it took the form of leisure to think. If society—not self,—say these Russians, can be supplied by everybody working eight, or seven, or six hours, well and good—then everybody will have more time to do that which he most wishes to do—study, play, think, travel. And if society can supply itself with all

that it needs by working only three or four hours a day, then so much the better—more time to do the real and delightful things which have nothing to do with either laborious toil or the hoarding of mere possessions. "Oh," said one old Volga peasant to one of my interpreters, "I shall not live to see it, but my son tells me that no one will have to work more than four or five hours a day after a while, and then every one can study and get a good education." And that, rather than material possessions in the new day, seemed the great point to him.

And truly, talking to the principal statesmen and leaders of Russia as well as many of the industrial workers everywhere, I was persistently impressed by the fact that they also seemed to see this new development in just this way—in terms of general improvement, and always with the goal in view not of luxury but of an intellectual leisure which is to follow upon the acquisition of sufficient material equipment. One could always get ten, twenty, thirty to join in such a discussion anywhere, but never with a dissenting voice from this program of general prosperity and general culture.

And this finally led me to fancy that possibly Russia—and that in the near future, should its present program succeed—is destined to enter upon an intellectual labor which will go farther than has any other thing as yet toward solving the strange mystery of our being here at all.

I wonder.

* * *

Vladimir Ilitch Ulianov, Nikolai Lenin. If the world ever goes over to Communism, how great will be this man's fame! A world hero, I presume. Another Jesus. Already Russia is filled with his statues and pictures, so numerous as to constitute an atmosphere. In Moscow alone there are so many busts and statues of him as to swell the popu-

lation. Thus: population of Moscow *without* statues of Lenin, 2,000,000; *with* statues of Lenin, 3,000,000. And so all over the country. And the thoroughness and efficacy with which those in power have carried his theories, his words, his writings, his dreams and personality to every human being throughout the length and breadth of the great country. Every written word published not only in the thirty-volume set of his complete works, but also in innumerable smaller editions and pamphlets. And the popularity of them. The millions just learning to read and write must use his writings for their textbooks. His shrewd and farseeing observations and pithy phrases painted on red banners flung across the sky, or hung in workers' clubs and factories, or in the corridors of public buildings.

The Lenin Institute in Moscow on Soviet Square, an appallingly somber pile of dark gray stone facing the bright-colored buildings of the Square, houses within its spacious and well-equipped walls everything that is left of Lenin, save what is to be found in the body lying in the Red Square. His original manuscripts, every scrap of paper he ever scribbled on, his personal belongings, photographs, and besides, a complete collection of every edition of his printed works, and every word written about him and his theories, called "Leninism."

And his body lies in a glass case, under the red-canopied ceiling of a somber wooden mausoleum on the Red Square. A harsh white light beats down on his pale, tired face, with its high Tartar cheekbones, large forehead and sparse beard. A little man, a very tired-looking man (it seemed to me he must be weary of lying there under the gaze of the millions of eyes that have looked upon his passive face). But oh, how fascinating that face, and how enthralling the stories of his reactions to life. And how

much loved by all those who worked with him. To this day, Kalinin, Trotzky, Rykov, will shed tears as they tell of his merits, his wisdom, his grandeur. To them as to most Russians, he is really a new Christ. And now nightly, year in and year out, visited by great throngs, almost a thousand strong, ever changing, which gather to look on him and take renewed inspiration from his body!

You may see them at night in winter, between five and seven, lined up against the high, snow-capped wall of the Kremlin, waiting, waiting. For between those hours all are allowed to enter, single file. Now and then as one passes he will wipe his eyes. Another, more mystic, will cross himself or reverently touch the rail which surrounds the glass case holding his body. Others loiter and stare, bending upon him an earnest or reverent or seeking, or would-be deciphering eye,—the deeds and the fame and power of him at this hour staggering their range of conception. Not only that but there is by now, so I am told, a growing superstition among the masses in regard to him, which implies that so long as his body remains as it was in life, Communism will endure; when his body begins to disintegrate, so will Communism!

Karl Radek, a Polish Jew and a Communist, only recently exiled by the Party to the Mongolian frontier because of his sympathies with Trotzky, but who during the last three years of Lenin's life was very close to him, told me much of the man. A tireless worker, according to Radek; fearless, selfless, with a whimsical humor twinkling in his keen eyes. He knew few details of any science or philosophy—nothing thoroughly—and yet was entirely capable of sensing the meaning of every science and theory, and most swift and brilliant in his deductions and his power to seize upon any idea in any field which might be of advantage to Russia. One of the first things he said

on coming into power was that electricity and education should go hand-in-hand in the new Russia. Mechanically untrained and helpless himself, he yet made the machine industrialization of Soviet Russia the new crusade. Radek told me that he had once given Lenin a fountain pen, but noting that he continued to use a pencil or the old pen on his desk, he asked him why?

"Oh, I can't make out how the thing works," he replied, nor did he ever attempt to.

Radek also said, with a sad and tender smile, that no bust or picture of Lenin—not even his body in the mausoleum—in any way conveys him; that something in his temperament, his mental and emotional color and feeling, so moved and fascinated his followers—and does to this hour, as to transfigure him and so defy any attempt at re-presentation. I can believe that. Is not the spirit of man fire? And is not fire featureless and beyond understanding?

Sleep well, Ilitch, father of a new and possibly—who shall say?—world-altering social force. How fortunate, you, its chosen if martyred instrument. How fortunate indeed.

THE END



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